

# COVID-19 Status

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## SEP 4, 2020

As of Sept. 2, a total of 14,310 people in Alberta have tested positive for COVID-19, with 1,415 cases currently active. Two weeks ago, Alberta's active case count was 1,144. The average number of daily new cases confirmed for week ending Sept. 2 is 143, compared to 102 the previous week. This is a 40 per cent increase.

Currently, 46 people are in hospital with the virus and nine of them are in an intensive care unit. In all, 12,653 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.

We are saddened to see COVID-19 continue to take Albertans lives. Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, 242 Albertans have died of causes related to the virus. Since our last all-staff update last week, another five people have died. We offer our genuine sympathies to the families and loved ones of these individuals and share in their loss. We also send our support to the caregivers who have lost patients to COVID-19.

## Things You Need to Know

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### COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers – The Latest Numbers

This data tracks the number of employees and physicians with AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) tested for COVID-19 as well as the number of positive tests and confirmed exposures in the workplace. Full details are in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](#).

Summary, as of Sept. 2:

- 46,549 (AHS, APL and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19, with 432 (or 0.93 per cent) testing positive.
- Of the 432 people who tested positive, 71 (or 16.4 per cent) were infected in the workplace. The source of infection for 102 of the 398 positive results is still being investigated.
- 2,987 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19, with 37 (or 1.24 per cent) testing positive.
- Of the 37 physicians who tested positive, three (or 8.1 per cent) were infected through workplace exposure. The source of infection for three of the positive physician results is still being investigated.

For more information, see the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing [infographic](#) and [dashboard](#).

### **APL Processes 1 Million COVID-19 Swabs**

On Sept. 3, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) processed the one millionth COVID-19 swab in Alberta. This represents about 790,000 unique Albertans having been tested for COVID-19 since late January.



This accomplishment speaks to the collaborative testing continuum. It includes our teams that created the online booking tool and our Health Link teams helping those who call for assistance and information. It also includes our frontline assessment centre workers and those transporting samples to our APL facilities, where our teams process each and every swab with care and diligence. And it includes our contact tracers, who follow up on every positive result, as well as thousands of team members from across all zones involved in the pandemic response to date.

This is a true team effort.

We began to offer COVID testing in Alberta on Jan. 23. Since then, we have progressed significantly in our approach, hitting many other milestones, including:

- January 2020: dedicated COVID testing available in Alberta
- March 2020: first Alberta case confirmed
- March 2020: online assessment tool goes live
- April 2020: testing offered to all symptomatic Albertans, and auto-dialer delivery of negative test results across the province
- May 2020: testing eligibility expanded to asymptomatic close contacts of confirmed positive cases
- June 2020: testing eligibility expanded to all Albertans, symptomatic or not
- May 2020: new online feature to book a COVID-19 test went live as an extension to the online assessment tool
- August 2020: partnership with pharmacies including Shoppers Drug Mart, to expand accessibility of asymptomatic testing.

We know many more milestones have contributed to where we are, and where we are going. We continue to drive innovation and improvements that will allow us to improve accessibility and efficiency of testing, end-to-end.

None of this would be possible without our teams of dedicated AHS and APL staff. We know your work has been intense and the pace unrelenting. We can't thank you enough for your continued commitment to care, excellence and Albertans' wellness.

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message: Heading Back to School**

It's back-to-school time and during the pandemic this presents a host of new challenges and anxieties for parents and guardians, including many AHS staff, physicians and volunteers. In this vlog, I (Verna) am joined by:

- Tony Bennett, executive director, HR, Analytics and Planning

- Veronica De Freitas, program manager, Respectful Workplaces and Employee Relations.

I invite you to watch [our conversation about the resources available for our people to support a safe return to school.](#)



### **Keep Yourself and Loved Ones Healthy**

We recognize September may be a stressful month if you are adapting to new routines at work and home. We can always do things to help us through this challenging month. When taking care of others, such as children, it's important to remember to care for ourselves, too. Staying healthy and well can help you and your loved ones maintain a balanced lifestyle.

Supports include:

- [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#)
- [Self-Care Tip Sheets](#)

### **Health Link Receives More Than a Million Calls**

More than one million people have called Health Link since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in mid-March. That's an average of more than 5,500 calls a day to the provincewide 24/7 telephone information and advice line. The milestone shatters normal averages, about 750,000 callers a year and between 2,000 and 2,500 callers a day.



Calls to Health Link began growing in January when reports from around the world noted a new virus, COVID-19. As the pandemic unfolded in March, callers dialed 811 by the tens of thousands.

Increasingly anxious Albertans made more 248,000 calls to Health Link that month, with a peak of 12,000 on a single day. Callers focused on questions about whether it was safe to go out, COVID-19's signs and symptoms, where and when they could be tested and how could they isolate.

By then, all hands were on deck. Health Link received assistance from many areas across AHS and in any given 24-hour period pulled in some 275 extra staff from multiple departments.

"During our pandemic response, AHS' provincial structure enabled strong collaboration and supportive communication," says Sue Conroy, the senior provincial director for Provincial Clinical Programs. "Our response was strengthened by leveraging many existing relationships and partnerships in our organization."

For Health Link, these were with: Public Health, Medical Officers of Health, Communicable Disease Control, Emergency and Urgent Care teams, Information Technology, Space Management, Communications, Quality Healthcare Improvement, Provincial Staffing Services and Human Resources. AHS' Executive Leadership Team and the leaders and teams in the Emergency Communications Centre have also provided tremendous support to Health Link, Sue says.

"I extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone at Health Link - staff, leaders and those who stepped up from other portfolios. The Health Link teams have consistently gone above and beyond, and have helped our province's COVID-19 response stand out nationally and internationally. They've provided exceptional care and support to Albertans," says Dr. Francois Belanger, AHS' chief medical officer and vice president, Quality. "We've had many challenges along the way. I recognize the impact dramatic increases in call volumes, increases in workload and a rapidly changing response to the pandemic have had on teams."

For many Albertans, Health Link is their first point of contact with Alberta's healthcare system.

"Health Link has a critical role in Alberta as a first line of response and defense in our battle against COVID-19," Sue says. The urgency and relentless pace of calls have blurred time at Health Link.

"It's hard to believe it's been six months since COVID-19 became a global pandemic," Sue says. "It seems the time has gone by very quickly. On the other hand, March feels like a lifetime away. During all of it, there's been a heightened awareness of the important work we do in Health Link."

Even in the face of continued high call volumes, Health Link has taken on many new roles and initiatives. Among them: the physician support line, the 844 Coordinated Early Identification and Response Line, negative test result notification and collaborating in the implementation of the Rehabilitation Advice Line. As well, this week the Addictions and Mental Health Helpline moved back under the umbrella of Health Link. The service supports Albertans with mental health and addictions needs, an area of increasing need during the pandemic.

“It has been truly amazing to see the entire Health Link team rise to the challenges of responding to COVID-19,” says Dr. Denise Watt, an emergency physician and Health Link’s medical director.

The challenges continue, with Health Link still answering about 40,000 calls a week.

“I continue to be amazed by the adaptability, flexibility, positivity and resilience demonstrated every day by Health Link leaders and frontline staff,” Sue says. “I so appreciate everyone working at Health Link, for their dedication and selfless commitment in the service of others.”

Others are also appreciative.

“What’s most compelling to me are the responses from the public and healthcare colleagues expressing gratitude for the positive impact Health Link has had during these difficult times,” Denise says. “It has also been gratifying to be part of such a supportive team. There will more challenges ahead, but are well prepared to face them together.”

### **Reminder of Importance of Daily Fit for Work Screening**

We have a shared responsibility in creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace to provide quality and safe patient care. Please remember to complete your [COVID-19 Daily Fit for Work Screening](#) before coming into work. Also, simple actions such as staying home when you are sick, [physical distancing](#), [continued hand hygiene](#) and [continuous masking](#) can help keep everyone safe.

Specific screening for staff working at continuing care facilities (long term care, designated supportive living, or congregate living) must continue to meet requirements from the latest Chief Medical Officer of Health [Orders](#). Information related to screening for people visiting residents and patients is available at [ahs.ca/visitation](https://ahs.ca/visitation).

All staff, physicians, volunteers and contractors are required to complete screening prior to work at any AHS facility.

## Be Well - Be Kind

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### **Sharing the Love: Thanking Our People**

Thank you for recognizing your team members and colleagues as we continue to work together to respond to the needs of Albertans during this pandemic. We love how you share the love and appreciate each other.

*Walking It Off*

Alberta Hospital Edmonton has been very creative in keeping patients and staff engaged during the pandemic. With limited resources and space to ensure physical distancing, staff from Recreation Facilities organized a collaborative walking challenge called Walk Across Canada via the Trans-Canada Highway.

Patients and staff completed laps of AHE's Friendship Trail. Each lap was counted and added weekly to the total. Each week a participating patient's name was drawn for a gift certificate to the Vocational Program's Campus Confection Store. The collaborative effort began on May 15 and the on July 16, participants completed the distance between Victoria, B.C. and St. John's, Nfld — 7,821 km. For details, see [institute.ahs.ca/FitFam](https://institute.ahs.ca/FitFam).





Staff and patients at Edmonton Hospital Alberta completed in July a walking challenge equal to the distance between Victoria, B.C. and St. John's N.L., more than 7,800 kilometres.

*From Connect Care to COVID*

*Barb Kathol, the senior program officer for Connect Care, sends this comment:*

*On behalf of leaders across AHS and Connect Care, I'd like to thank the Connect Care team members who redeployed in March for contact tracing and other roles to support AHS' COVID-*

*19 response. They hail from a variety of teams and selflessly gave up their regular jobs to help with the pandemic. Many of them continue to do so. It's a pretty remarkable contribution and we greatly admire their commitment to AHS and Albertans.*

#### *Cheerfulness Rewarded*

*Tracey McFarland of the Banff Medical Lab shares this kudo to a staff member:*

*One of our fantastic Banff Medical Lab assistants, Mardi Elliot, received a beautiful thank you bouquet from a patient. Mardi had gone above and beyond, making a few phone calls to clarify the patient's lab orders and received the bouquet the next day. The card said: "Your cheerfulness was greatly appreciated!"*



A patient at the Banff Medical Lab thanked Mardi Elliot for her cheerfulness with a bouquet of flowers.

*Thanks for Your Big Hearts*



*An anonymous writer shared this sentiment:*

*We are so grateful for the work you are doing and the risks you take every day. Your team is dedicated to the health and safety of everyone you come into contact with and it shows. Your family loves you and understands the risks you are taking and care you have for everyone. Thank you for your big hearts and your commitment.*

### **Wrapping Up**

This holiday traditionally ushers out summer and ushers in a new school year.

We hope this Labour Day weekend brings you an opportunity to recharge, renew and prepare for the months ahead.

In closing, we also want to thank the thousands of people behind the million-mark milestones achieved by Health Link and Alberta Precision Laboratories of a million calls and a million COVID-19 tests respectively. Such accomplishments are only possible by great teams and even greater collaboration. We are constantly amazed at our teams' abilities and dedication.

As always, we are grateful and appreciative of all you do to serve and protect the health of Albertans.

*Please Note: This message has been modified from the AHS Daily Updates.*

**\*\*\*Please share this information as appropriate\*\*\***

**\*\*\*For Alberta Health Services – Indigenous specific questions/concerns please email [ahs.ecc.operations.ih@ahs.ca](mailto:ahs.ecc.operations.ih@ahs.ca) \*\*\***

**\*\*\*For Indigenous Services Canada please email [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca) \*\*\***

*Forwarded on behalf of the Provincial Indigenous Health Hub*

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