

Hello,

Please see most current information below, as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve in Alberta.

Please note, if you have an alternate designate in addition to yourself, please reply to this email with the contact name, title and email address, so that we can add it to our Indigenous contact distribution list, going forward.

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### Indigenous Specific Resources:

#### Indigenous Health COVID web page:

The Indigenous Health COVID web page is now live. It can be accessed directly through this link: [www.ahs.ca/covidih](http://www.ahs.ca/covidih) or via the [main COVID landing page](#) in the “Information For” box. We will continue to update it with new information and resources as they become available.

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## COVID-19 Status

### JULY 22, 2020

As of July 16, a provincial total of 9,114 individuals have been confirmed with COVID-19, of which 807 cases are active. 120 of the new cases of COVID-19 were confirmed between July 15 and 16 – this is the first time since May 2 that we’ve identified more than 100 cases in a single day. The average number of daily cases confirmed this week is 86, compared to 45 the previous week, a 90 per cent increase. Currently, there are 69 people in hospital, with eight in an intensive care unit. 8,142 Albertans have now recovered.

There have been a total of 165 deaths in Alberta related to COVID-19 to date. We are saddened to continue to lose Albertans to COVID-19. We continue to offer our genuine sympathies to the families and loved ones of these individuals.

A total of 560,493 COVID-19 tests have been completed since the start of the pandemic.

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## Things You Need to Know

### COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](#). These statistics provide the total number of AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) employees and physicians tested, including a breakdown of the number of positive tests and those who have been confirmed to have been exposed in the workplace.

As of July 15:

- 36,625 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19, and of those tested, 287 (or 0.78 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 287 employees who have tested positive, 51 (or 17.8 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with 35 of the 287 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).

- 2,325 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and of those tested, 33 (or 1.42 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 33 physicians who have tested positive, three (or 9.1 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with two of the 33 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).

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

### **Vigilance in Managing COVID-19 in Alberta**

It is critical that we continue to take required precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 within AHS workplaces. Outbreaks and ongoing increases in daily cases underscore the vigilance required to reduce risk and protect yourself, patients, staff and visitors.

In addition to continued hand hygiene and adhering to all additional infection prevention and control and personal protective equipment (PPE) measures, we cannot overstate the importance of consistent compliance with the provincial continuous masking directive. Specifically, all staff, physicians and volunteers are required to mask continuously in all areas where they may come in contact with patients, families, visitors, or the public (e.g., elevator, common areas, and gift shops). In other areas such as corporate settings, health records departments and laboratory services, masking is required when physical distancing of two metres cannot be maintained.

This is a **requirement**, not an expectation, and applies to all zones, and all AHS or subsidiary facilities (clinical and corporate).

There is an extremely high-risk for transmission of COVID-19 in small, enclosed spaces such as break rooms, charting areas, open work spaces and other common areas. Sometimes [physical distancing](#) of at least two metres is not possible in these spaces. Wearing a mask at all times eliminates having to guess.

This requirement is applicable even in AHS corporate offices. If you are in an office space or common area where people might enter and you will not be able to maintain physical distancing, you are required to wear a mask.

Many of you have likely seen social media discussion about mask use in public, as well as in our hospitals and other facilities. Many people have pointed out that visitors are required to wear masks at all times in our hospitals, and AHS staff, physicians and volunteers should be expected to do the same.

Simply put, AHS staff, physicians and volunteers **are** expected to do the same.

To support our teams in this effort, AHS has provided [tips](#) to help manage the discomfort that comes with continuous masking. We have also provided [video guidance](#) emphasizing the importance of continuous masking, and continue to provide additional support through Workplace Health and Safety, Infection Prevention and Control and Contracting, Procurement and Supply Management teams.

As a valued member of the AHS team, please don't forget your actions are closely observed by those outside the medical community. We have an opportunity to be positive role models by wearing a mask on the job as required, and after work while in public.

Masks should complement – not replace – other prevention measures. Please remember to:

- Wear appropriate PPE at all times. This varies depending on the precautions for each patient. Don and doff your PPE appropriately. Posters available on AHS Insite provide good guidance for appropriate [donning](#) and [doffing](#). Ask a partner for assistance, if required.
- When physical distancing is not possible, such as in staff common areas, masks help prevent transmission. This means that if you need to remove your mask to eat or drink, and there isn't room to social distance, you must find another location.
- Ensure all patients are masked when leaving their inpatient unit to attend services within other areas of the hospital. They should first perform hand hygiene before donning a mask.
- Take your daily health screening very seriously and pay attention to your physical health. Do not come to work sick.
- Practice frequent [hand hygiene](#).
- Please gently remind your peers when you notice they might be forgetting good practices, and be grateful if they point out you are doing the same.

[Please watch this video message](#) where I, Verna, remind our teams that provincial continuous masking directive is a requirement, and keeps patients and colleagues safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The image is a video message thumbnail. At the top, an orange banner contains the text "Important message from Dr. Verna Yiu". Below this is a video frame showing a woman, Dr. Verna Yiu, from the chest up. She has short dark hair and is wearing a blue and white striped scrubs top. The background is a wall with several framed pictures. On the left side of the video frame, the text "We Must Remain Vigilant" is written in white. A large teal play button icon is overlaid on the video frame. At the bottom of the video frame, a teal banner contains the text "Masking is a requirement to reduce risk and protect yourself, patients, staff and visitors." in white.

### **Misericordia Hospital Outbreak Update**

On the evening of July 14, 2020, Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Order 30-2020 was signed by Dr. Deena Hinshaw. This order applies a single-site restriction on staff and contracted providers, including privileged medical staff and midwifery staff, who worked at the Misericordia Community Hospital on or after July 2, 2020.

This order was necessary in order to restrict the movement of Misericordia staff members and contracted providers among other healthcare facilities. The order prohibits these staff and contracted providers from providing in-person services at designated healthcare facilities other than the Misericordia for the 14 days following any day a staff member or contracted provider works at the Misericordia Community Hospital.

Edmonton Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) has been working to put the order into place, which includes the development of an exemption process. These restrictions can cause reductions in the available critical members of a care team. The loss of staff due to restrictions could compromise patient care and safety. As such, there was a need to permit staff/contracted providers and privileged medical staff who have worked at a site under outbreak, to work at other worksites before the end of a single-site restriction, if their role is critical and there is no alternative coverage.

The exemption process is being applied on a case-by-case basis, managed through the ZEOC and Zone Executive Leaders. Final authorization rests with the Lead Edmonton Zone Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Chris Sikora, as specified in a directive associated with the CMOH Order. Patient and staff safety will be the deciding factor in any approval.

Anyone being considered for an exemption to this single-site restriction must not be symptomatic or under a work restriction because of COVID-19 exposure from international travel, or be a close contact of a confirmed case.

The application of this acute care single site restriction is intended to break the chain of transmission and prevent the spread of disease beyond the site, and help bring the facility back to a state of good health.

### **Change to Visitation Restrictions**

Beginning July 23, Alberta Health and AHS will be shifting from restricted access to a safe access approach to family support and visitation in continuing care facilities. Under this new approach, we recognize that family and friends are part of the care team for individuals who live in congregate care facilities, not just social visitors whose time with residents is discretionary. Under the revised guidelines, which use a risk-based approach to visitation, each resident can have two designate family/support persons who will be able to visit indoors for as long and as often as they wish, as long as they coordinate with the facility. The two designated family/support persons will need an appointment only to use shared indoor spaces. There will be updates to end-of-life, the appeals process, and more.

More details will be updated and posted in the coming days on [ahs.ca/visitation](https://ahs.ca/visitation).

### **Update on Support for Alberta's Hutterite Colonies**

Just as there have been cases in many other communities across the province, Hutterite communities in Alberta have not been spared from this virus. And, as with any other community, Alberta Health

Services works closely with both cases and contacts, as well as community leaders, to implement public health measures and stop further spread.

In fact, this work on Alberta's Hutterite colonies started months ago in collaboration with the Hutterite Safety Council. This is a volunteer body of Hutterite spiritual leaders, educators, volunteer firefighters, safety instructors, and first medical responders who serve their communities.

We are grateful to this council and other community leaders who are working closely with AHS to protect communities within and outside their home colonies.

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message**

Health Link 811 — Alberta's 24/7 health information and advice telephone line — was on the front line of the province's pandemic response months before the first case was confirmed in Alberta. Demand for the service has skyrocketed in 2020, and the services Health Link provides have expanded to better support Albertans during the pandemic. In this vlog, I, Verna, am joined by four guests to talk about Health Link's work during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are: Sue Conroy, AHS Senior Provincial Director of Provincial Clinical Programs; Tricia Chambers, Provincial Director, Operations, Health Link and PADIS; Edith Friesen, Senior Consultant, Learning & Development, Health Link; and Lori Leaf, a clinical resource nurse with Health Link. [My guests talk about Health Link's challenges and triumphs, especially in the early days of the pandemic, as well as how the service is preparing for the months ahead.](#)



### **PPE Question of the Week – Is COVID-19 Airborne?**


Concerns have been expressed in the media about possible airborne spread of COVID-19. In this PPE Question of the Week, Dr. Stephanie Smith — Director of Infection Prevention and Control at the






University of Alberta Hospital — examines where these concerns come from: a cluster of cases in people who were sitting at three different tables in the same restaurant. [Dr. Smith explains why there's not sufficient evidence to confirm the infections were caused by airborne transmission.](#)

PPE Question of the Week

**What's the latest science on airborne spread of COVID-19?**

*Is this really a risk?* 



Dr. Stephanie Smith answers PPE question of the week.

#### **24/7 On-call Assistance now Available for Family Support and Visitation Concerns**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, AHS made the difficult decision to limit the interactions between patients/residents, families and visitors in order to ensure their safety, as well as the safety of physicians and staff providing their care. These decisions have not been taken lightly, and we understand it has been difficult for all involved.

To help our staff during this time, the AHS Clinical Ethics Service 24/7 Rapid Response Ethics Consultation Service is available to respond to questions and issues relating to family presence and visitation guidelines, in addition to other COVID-19 related questions. The Rapid Response Ethics Consultation Service can be accessed by calling 403-689-3548.

For other clinical ethics inquiries, please email [clinicalethics@ahs.ca](mailto:clinicalethics@ahs.ca) or call 1-855-943-2821. The Clinical Ethics Service is available for any care provider seeking support and assistance in resolving difficult or ethically challenging situations.

Stay up-to-date on the latest family support and visitation guidance at [ahs.ca/visitation](https://ahs.ca/visitation).

## Be Well - Be Kind

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**Celebrities Celebrating AHS**

Messages of gratitude to our healthcare staff keep pouring in from musicians, models, actors and athletes from all over the country.

Today's shout-out comes from [the Calgary jump blues and swing band, the Dino Martinis.](#)

In this video, the award-winning band thanks our staff with a cheerful melody.

Stay tuned and follow AHS on [social media](#) for more celebrity shout-outs.



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

Thank you for sending us your submissions to recognize 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.

#### *IT Heroes Supporting the Frontline*

*Alberta Health Services Information Management and Technology teams have worked tirelessly to ensure that our physicians, clinicians and frontline staff have the necessary clinical systems and technology required to take care of our patients. They have been instrumental in supporting assessment sites, preparing clinical systems for surge and patient care, providing the technology required to support virtual care, supporting COVID-19 lab test collection and resulting, along with much more. We thank all our IT teams.*

*-Dina*

*1-844 Team Appreciation*

*This has been an amazing team to be redeployed during this pandemic. We started with four team members and have grown to a full Health Link line. Through the highs and lows, we have laughed together and shared sad moments. We have kept our focus and sense of humour through it all. This has been our HOME away from home. Thank you is an inadequate word to express the gratitude, sacrifices and love that we now share for each other. It has been my honour and privilege to work with all these marvelous healthcare workers who have given their all. WE rock (and love dark chocolate, no nuts).*

- Michele

We know this has been an extremely challenging few months for AHS teams and many of us are tired. The demands of COVID-19 have been relentless and on top of this, wearing a mask continuously for upwards of eight hours a day is not easy. However, it is vitally important that we all remain vigilant and continue to do everything necessary to protect our patients, and ourselves. This includes wearing a mask, cleaning hands often and thoroughly, maintaining two metres' distance and staying home when sick.

We know this pandemic isn't over, in spite of how much we all want it to be. As is the case around the world, we've had to make sacrifices and change how we do things because of the serious risks posed by COVID-19. In spite of the re-launch activities in Alberta, we can't slip on the practices that allowed us to keep our numbers low in this province.

It really comes down to the same message we've been sharing broadly with Albertans: my mask protects you, your mask protects me. We are still in this together. In the midst of months of sweeping change, that sentiment has not changed. We will continue to do our best for each other and especially for those who are most vulnerable to the serious effects of COVID-19.

As we maintain our vigilance with COVID-19, please also find time to enjoy some summer fun this weekend. Safely spend time with family and friends. Do all you can to prevent the spread of COVID-19, wherever you go, and please take good care of yourselves.

*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) \*\*\***

**Josipa** Pavicic on behalf of Nadine McRee

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