

JUNE 29, 2020

As of June 25, a provincial total of 7,851 individuals have been confirmed with COVID-19, of which 506 are active. The average number of daily cases this week was 40, a 4% decrease from the week before. Currently, there are 38 people in hospital, with eight in an intensive care unit. 7,191 Albertans have now recovered.

There was one life lost in Alberta related to COVID-19 this week, for a total of 154. We continue to extend our condolences to the families and loved ones of these Albertans.

A total of 415,716 COVID-19 tests have been completed since the start of the pandemic.

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 June 24:

- 30,930 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19, and of those tested, 251 (or 0.81 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 251 employees who have tested positive, 38 (or 15.1 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with 21 of the 251 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).
- 1,861 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and of those tested, 32 (or 1.72 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 32 physicians who have tested positive, one (or 3.1 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with three of the 32 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](#).

Verna's Weekly Video Message

In my (Verna's) video message this week, I explore a key focus in our pandemic response — maintaining services for continuing care clients and doing everything we can to ensure their safety.

We knew at the start of this pandemic that elderly individuals in continuing care facilities are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19. To date, this respiratory virus has taken a disproportionate toll on older individuals — a trend that's certainly not unique to Alberta. We're seeing this happen around the world.

Because of this, AHS has responded quickly to outbreaks in continuing care facilities — both private and those operated by AHS — and we've also taken many proactive measures to protect home care clients and continuing care residents, as well as the AHS staff who care for them. Our work in this area has been comprehensive and coordinated, involving many AHS teams and external partners.

[In this week's vlog](#), I talk with four leaders who are key to our seniors health response: Dr. James Silvius, Senior Medical Director of Seniors Health; David O'Brien, Senior Program Officer, Community, Seniors, Addiction and Mental Health; Amy Good, Executive Director, Palliative and Continuing Care, Calgary Zone; and Ronda White, Chief Audit Executive, Internal Audit and Enterprise Risk Management.

They talk about the actions we've taken, how we've adjusted our audit processes, and the challenges of shielding continuing care residents from the virus, while minimizing loneliness and isolation.

Hand Sanitizer Update

Hand hygiene continues to be essential to the health and wellness of our patients and staff, along with other measures such as staying home when sick, masking and maintaining physical distance from others, to prevent the spread of infection.

Questions have been raised regarding the safety of hand sanitizer containing technical-grade ethanol, due to its higher content of acetaldehyde (see the [FAQ](#) for more detail). AHS recently assessed the degree of exposure to acetaldehyde when using hand sanitizer containing technical-grade ethanol. Several conditions were assessed, from using hand sanitizer at a moderate rate (once every

four minutes) in a normally-ventilated medium-sized room, to using hand sanitizer at a high rate (once every 80 seconds) in a small room with no ventilation.

The acetaldehyde levels in the breathing zone of the individual applying hand sanitizer ranged from 0.02 ppm to 0.13 ppm. In comparison, the Alberta Occupational Exposure Limit for acetaldehyde is 25 ppm. Therefore, acetaldehyde levels associated with the use of hand sanitizer containing technical-grade ethanol were 192 to 1250 times lower than the Alberta Occupational Exposure Limit. These results demonstrated a considerable margin of safety with respect to occupational exposure, and should reassure staff that hand sanitizer containing technical-grade ethanol is safe when used as directed. Health Canada has indicated the following warnings regarding hand sanitizer containing technical-grade ethanol: adults only; do not use on broken or damaged skin; do not inhale; not recommended for use by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. In the event staff would like to consider reducing use of the hand sanitizer products containing technical-grade ethanol, the use of proper hand hygiene with warm water and soap is an alternative.

For more information, please see the [full assessment report](#) and a [discussion document](#) that reviews acetaldehyde exposure from the use of hand sanitizer.

AHS is committed to ensuring the ongoing supply and availability of hand sanitizer during a temporary disruption in the production of Microsan® as the supplier switches back to using pharmaceutical-grade ethanol. Alternative products continue to be temporarily sourced from a variety of suppliers and manufacturers. Areas that are using technical-grade hand sanitizer will have labels applied to the dispensers. Areas that are using pharmaceutical grade hand sanitizer do not have labels. As technical grade hand sanitizer is replaced by pharmaceutical grade hand sanitizer, labels will also be removed.

Several guidance documents are available to assist sites with the preservation and management of hand sanitizer, as required. For ongoing updates, visit ahs.ca/handsanitizer.

Reminder: COVID-19 Daily Fit for Work Screening

As sites continue to make adjustments based on the revised [COVID-19 Daily Fit for Work Screening Protocol](#), it's important to remember that all AHS workers should be diligent in modelling safe work practices and stay home when sick.

Each site's leadership is responsible for determining how it will implement screening processes at the local level. 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.

For more information, including the Online Fit for Work Screening Tool, visit ahs.ca/fitforwork. Talk to your leader if you have questions about fit for work screening at your site.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Tip of the Day

The daily series - *PPE Tip of the Day* – features quick and simple reminders you can take forward into your practice, from shift to shift.

Fit Testing Reminder

AHS continues to prioritize fit testing across all clinical areas to ensure staff are fit tested to alternative models of N95 respirators. This is specific to those staff who perform or assist in aerosol-generating medical procedures. Our current focus is to transition healthcare workers fit tested to the 1870+, 9105s and 9105 models. Workers fit tested to these respirators will be notified by Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) to arrange fit-testing at a WHS clinic or by a fit test designate. Visit the [Respiratory Protection Insite page](#) for more information on fit testing. Also, see ahs.ca/covidppe to learn more about when to use N95 respirators at work.


To see previous PPE Tips of the Day, please visit the PPE Tips archive, [here](#).

PPE Question of the Week

Many follow-up questions came in following a previous PPE Question of the Week about the differences between technical-grade and pharmaceutical-grade ethanol, and how that impacts the hand sanitizers used at AHS. Several of the questions focused on exposure to an ingredient in technical-grade ethanol called acetaldehyde. This is the same topic discussed in detail above.

In this PPE Question of the Week, Dr. Steve Tsekrekos — Medical Director of Workplace Health and Safety — [talks about the most common exposure route and how much exposure to acetaldehyde one could expect while using hand sanitizer with technical-grade ethanol during a workday.](#)

PPE Question of the Week

What's the latest
on technical vs.
pharmaceutical grade
hand sanitizer? 



Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos answers PPE question of the week.

Be Well - Be Kind

Mental Health Supports: Managing Stress and Anxiety

Although our communities and workplaces are in the process of re-opening, we know that you and your colleagues are still experiencing [stress and anxiety](#) during this time. You may still have disruptions in your work routines, caring for your [family](#) and [yourself](#), or feeling [fatigued](#). Regardless of what's happening in your life right now, more than ever, taking care of yourself is key.

Many of life's events are not within our control, but the way you choose to respond to them is. You can make a difference and take proactive steps in managing health, work, and life challenges by accessing support services and resources like Life Smart Coaching. This service offers expert support and coaching to help you maintain your mental and physical well-being. Learn more by checking out the [Life Smart Coaching Services](#). Access services by calling the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) at **1-877-273-3134** available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

See the additional resources below:

- [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#)
- [Self-Care Tip Sheets](#)
- [COVID-19 Wellness seminars](#) (register through [MyLearningLink](#))
- [Health and Wellness](#)

If you would like to provide feedback on the resources, contact wellness@ahs.ca.

Celebrities Celebrating AHS

Musicians, models, athletes, and artists across the country keep sending messages of gratitude and support for our frontline healthcare staff.

Today's thank you message comes from Okotoks-born international model, [Taylor McCarroll](#).

"Now more than ever, we've come together as a family during these crazy times," she says.

"Thank you, you guys are amazing and the work you're doing is amazing. We love and appreciate you."

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



Sharing the Love: Thanking our People

We want you to know you are appreciated for all you are doing, and we want to encourage you to share that love with your colleagues. If you see someone doing something inspiring let them know and then let us know. Celebrating each other is so important as we continue to work through this pandemic together. Over the course of the past months, you have participated in, and witnessed, so many incredible selfless acts of kindness. We've captured as many of the messages which describe your gratitude for those around you as we can, and we've posted them on a web page to share across the organization. If you need a little positivity in your day, take a moment to read these inspiring posts and share some of your own at ahs.ca/sharingthelove.

Stay Vigilant as we Re-launch

Albertans have been basking in the sunshine (and hunkering down in the rain storms) over the past week, as they embrace the lifting of restrictions during re-launch across the province. As has been the case with re-launches in other jurisdictions, easing up on the restrictions has meant that COVID-19 has the opportunity to spread in gatherings and activities taking place in our communities. As we see that happening, it is such an important reminder that we must take this pandemic seriously. It has just as much power to infect as it did months ago and we have just as much responsibility to reduce the spread and protect each other now, as we did months ago. Please keep two metres apart when you're out and about. Please wash or sanitize your hands often. Please wear a mask in public when you're in more crowded locations (and all the time when you're at work, when providing patient care or working in patient care areas). Please stay home if you have any symptoms of illness. Please remember that every Albertan is important and continue to work hard to protect them, and encourage those around you to protect you, too!

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 *****

*****For Indigenous Services Canada please email sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca *****

Josipa Pavicic on behalf of Nadine McRee

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