

COVID-19 Status

MAY 25, 2020

We have confirmed 32 new cases of COVID-19 over the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 6,800. Of the total cases, we suspect 611 cases may have been acquired in the community from an unknown source (these cases are not included in outbreak data). Currently, there are 54 cases in hospital, with six in an intensive care unit. 5,801 cases have now recovered.

We must report the sad news of two additional deaths in the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 134 lives lost in Alberta related to COVID-19. We offer our sincere condolences to those who are grieving a loss today. It's a reminder of the seriousness of this virus – while we're so thankful our rate of infection has slowed, we cannot let our guard down and put those most vulnerable at greater risk.

3,205 tests were completed over the last 24 hours, bringing our total COVID-19 tests to 228,793 since the start of the pandemic.

Things You Need to Know

COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers Update

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 May 19:

- 22,079 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19, and of those tested, 214 (or 0.97 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 214 employees who have tested positive, 30 (or 14 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with 46 of the 214 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).
- 1,342 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and of those tested, 27 (or 2.01 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 27 physicians who have tested positive, none has been confirmed to have acquired infection through a workplace exposure (with one of the 27 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 Video Message of the Week

Alberta has performed more COVID-19 tests per capita than any province or territory in Canada, and more than many jurisdictions around the world. How did we do that and why does it matter? To answer these questions, I (Verna) [talked this week with three members of the leadership group at Alberta Precision Laboratories \(APL\)](#): Chief Operating Officer Tammy Hofer; Interim Chief Medical Laboratory Officer Dr. Carolyn O'Hara; and Dr. Graham Tipples, the Medical-Scientific Director for APL's Public Health lab. They talk about the history of APL, when APL first started responding to COVID-19, how APL

has ramped up testing in the province and what's next for APL in terms of its pandemic response. I also share information about a new 'gratitude wall' on the AHS website, which is also mentioned later in this update.



Maternity Services Restored in Calgary Zone

All inpatient labour and delivery, neonatal intensive care, postpartum and newborn care will be provided again at South Health Campus (SHC) effective June 3, 2020. All inpatient maternal and newborn services at High River Hospital (HRH) will also be reinstated the same day, with maternity staff at both sites returning in a phased approach starting June 1. This planned service return is contingent upon the Calgary Zone maintaining a manageable caseload of COVID-19 cases over the coming weeks.

Maternity services at SHC and HRH were temporarily suspended on April 21, as a function of ongoing Calgary Zone pandemic capacity planning. Thanks to the efforts of all Albertans in reducing the spread of COVID-19, it is now safe to resume maternity care at all acute care sites in the zone.

We would like to express our gratitude to the numerous teams, including Rural Health, Human Resources, Referral, Access, Advice, Placement, Information and Destination (RAAPID), Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Health Link and Information Technology (IT), whose collaborative efforts helped ensure the consolidation was seamless and safe. We would also like to thank the patients, families, staff, midwives and physicians affected by the temporary consolidation for their support and patience.

Resuming of Some Scheduled Overnight Surgeries and Procedures

The re-launch of scheduled day surgeries and procedures has been successful, thanks to the work of our staff and physicians. Between May 4 and today, approximately 3,000 scheduled day surgeries have been completed across all zones.

The Government of Alberta has [announced the AHS plan](#) to expand the resumption of surgery to include day surgeries and those requiring overnight and short stays.

We will continue to ensure emergent and urgent surgeries are maintained, while steadily increasing the number of surgeries. As we do this, we will balance the safety of patients and staff with the need to resume surgeries for Albertans waiting for care. We are addressing the backlog as quickly as we can, and also maintaining our ability to respond to the healthcare needs of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Decisions on which surgeries proceed are based on clinical need, with those most in need and waiting longest booked first. These decisions are being made at the zone level, and are also informed by the pandemic response in different parts of the province. Patients will be contacted directly regarding surgery times.

Staff and physicians redeployed from surgical services during the surgical postponement are being deployed back to their previous areas of work wherever possible. As we focus on the health of Albertans, we will also continue to support our staff and physicians throughout these changes. We thank you again, for your willingness to provide your skills and expertise to support the areas of greatest need during this pandemic.

Online Test Booking for COVID-19 Available on Monday in the Calgary Zone

On Monday May 25, AHS will launch a new feature to allow Albertans taking an [online self-assessment](#) to book an appointment online, if they need to be tested. This new online booking feature will launch in the Calgary Zone first, making it easier for people to schedule a COVID-19 test at a time that is convenient for them. Once an Albertan completes the online self-assessment, they will be presented with an option to book an appointment online if they live within 50 kilometres of a testing assessment centre. The symptomatic individual will be presented with the closest location, available appointment dates and times for testing. Upon selecting their chosen date and time, they will receive a booking confirmation and at the same time, the booking will show up in the schedule at the testing assessment centre. The online booking feature will help free up AHS' resources and will help Albertans access testing more conveniently.

COVID-19 Asymptomatic Patient Pilot Study Wraps Up

On April 9, as part of a COVID-19 pilot study, AHS began performing COVID-19 testing on patients admitted to hospital through the emergency department for reasons unrelated to COVID-19 illness, and who did not have symptoms of COVID-19.

Taking place at three acute care sites, including the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary, the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton and the Red Deer Regional Hospital, more than 1,500 tests were conducted on consenting patients throughout the course of the project, which concluded today. We are pleased to report that there were no asymptomatic patients who tested positive for the virus.

While more detailed communication about this study will become available, preliminary observations demonstrate two important conclusions from this work:

- We confirmed something we already knew - our Emergency Department (ED) teams are exceptional at their jobs. ED teams have been extremely adept at applying their skills and knowledge to identify patients with COVID-19, based on rigorous symptom assessment, even under difficult conditions. Well done!
- The risk of undetected COVID-19 patients being admitted through EDs in the first wave of the pandemic has been slight or none. This has significant implications for the rest of the hospital, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), effective assignment of isolation spaces and the confidence of our staff and patients in the safety of the environment. It also provides some comfort in outpatient settings - clinical assessment is very good at identifying patients unlikely to have COVID-19.


In the coming days, we will be analyzing the results of these tests to understand how we can best plan for ongoing COVID-19 infections in the community or a potential second wave.

Our sincerest thank you to all our ED staff for your work every day, and to everyone who participated in this pilot project.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Question of the Week – Hand Sanitizer

In this week's [PPE Question of the Week](#), Dr. Steve Tsekrekos — Medical Director of Workplace Health and Safety at AHS — explains the difference between technical-grade and pharmaceutical-grade ethanol, and how that impacts hand sanitizer products used at AHS. Shortages of pharmaceutical-grade ethanol has led Health Canada to approve hand sanitizer using technical-grade ethanol. The new hand sanitizing products at AHS can give off a slightly unpleasant odour but, yes, they are safe.

PPE Question of the Week

What's the difference between technical-grade and pharmaceutical-grade ethanol, and how does that impact hand sanitizer products I use at AHS? 



Dr. Mark Joffe answers PPE question of the week.

New Schedule for Updates

We are revising our schedule for the COVID-19 daily updates. Beginning next week on Monday, May 25, we will provide these written updates on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

As re-launch moves forward we will continue to assess the schedule for these updates and keep you advised. Equipping our staff and physicians with the latest information on COVID-19 remains a high priority and we will ensure you continue to receive current and relevant updates as we move through the next phases of this pandemic.

Re-launch at the Mass General in Boston

We all have questions about what will change and need to be managed differently as we provide care to Albertans in this ongoing new pandemic reality. A recent article published in the New Yorker magazine may be of interest to AHS staff and physicians as we move into re-launch across the province. It describes the approach to returning to work post-COVID-19 taken by Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. The article notes that success is dependent on a combination of four very familiar key strategies: hygiene measures, screening, distancing, and masks. As we move into establishing new normals in our places of work and in our lives outside of work, this provides a clear description of what it could look like and also illustrates some hope for success. The full article is available [here](#).

In the Zones

Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update – South

A shout out goes to members of the South Zone's Therapeutic Recreation (TR) team, for creative changes to programs and services during COVID-19, both virtual and otherwise.

Annette Yunick, TR Professional Practice Lead in South Zone, said clients in all parts of the zone have enjoyed taking part in virtual sessions and other new activities.

"In Lethbridge, when the community Expressive Arts therapy group was cancelled, the South Zone Therapeutic Recreation team stepped up to develop The Creative Journey virtual Zoom group, so clients could complete their therapy regardless of where they live," she explained.

"TR is also currently offering The Active Life, The Social Brain and The Creative Journey via Zoom groups across the zone – which amount to 19 Zoom group sessions weekly. Therapy is implemented in small groups depending on each person's needs." In April 2020, TR completed 512 virtual therapy appointments, which also included one-on-one therapy.

Social Brain sessions are designed to provide positive engagement and cognitive stimulation for those at risk for cognitive decline and depression, due to isolation and loneliness. Creative Journey provides a supportive environment for individuals with disabilities and offers the opportunity to express ideas, emotions, thoughts and feelings through artistic expression, also designed to support those facing isolation and loneliness. Active Living encourages a more active lifestyle through education and physical activity. It's a safe, supportive environment for adults who are limited to their home environment, have a chronic disease or mental health challenge, and could be at risk of physical deconditioning, declining mobility, falls, depression and loneliness.

“In Brooks Health Centre, long-term care residents still enjoy music care, games and trivia with a few creative changes,” said Annette. “In the Crowsnest Pass Health Centre, Lorna, one of the long-term care residents, has been able to visit with her daughter and her dog online (grandma was visiting also, but too shy for the picture) – it’s so precious to be able to connect in some fashion.”

At Medicine Hat Regional Hospital in the Rehabilitation Unit, patients can enjoy the outdoor garden area. One patient said it was the first time they were able to get outside for fresh air in a long time, and getting an outdoor ukulele lesson from the TR team was an added bonus.

According to Annette, “The immediate benefits of relaxation and happiness can be seen the minute they step outside.” The same is true at the Cardston Health Centre, where long-term care residents have been enjoying the outdoor patio, soon to become a garden hub.

Said one patient named Ernie, “I could spend every hour of the day here. If I could, I would even move my bed out here just to sleep under the stars!”



Crowsnest Pass Health Centre long-term care resident, Lorna, visits in a Zoom call, with her daughter and her dog.



Members of the Lethbridge Community Therapeutic Recreation team – When the community Expressive Arts therapy group at CASA in Lethbridge was cancelled, the south zone therapeutic recreation team stepped up to develop The Creative Journey virtual Zoom group so clients could complete their therapy online.

Be Well - Be Kind

Taking Care of your Mental Health

Keeping yourself mentally and physically healthy is one of the best ways to manage [stress](#) and anxiety. We know you have lots going on right now and may be dealing with challenges related to work, family, and other personal issues. When faced with the uncertainties during this time, you may experience stressful scenarios impacting how you think, feel and react in different situations.

Celebrities Celebrating our Frontline Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Edmonton-born actor Michael J. Fox is the latest Canadian celebrity to reach out and send a video of support for frontline healthcare workers at AHS.

“A big shout out to the healthcare workers in Alberta and beyond,” says Fox, star of the Back to the Future movie trilogy and the TV show, Family Ties.

“You’ve been incredible. I really appreciate it. We really appreciate it. We love you and we thank you.”

Follow AHS social media to see videos from more Canadian celebrities, including actors Andrew Phung and Andrea Bang from the TV show *Kim's Convenience*; Calgary pop band the Dino Martinis; Olympic Gold medallist Mark Tewksbury; singer-songwriter Reuben Bullock from *Reuben and the Dark*; and supermodel Heather Marks. We'll share a new video every couple of days.



Sharing the Love: Thanking Our People

As we continue on this journey together, we want to thank our people for their unwavering dedication, hard work and compassion during this unprecedented time. Messages of gratitude keep pouring in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. You've also shown so much appreciation for each other through your shout outs for your colleagues and team members. We are excited to be able to share those stories of thanks with you today on our new online platform, ahs.ca/sharingthelove.

Please take a few moments to look at the many messages, photos, and drawings made just for you on our [Sharing the Love: Thanking Our People](#) page. You can also add your own message of thanks to keep the spirit going. We hope this small token of appreciation from your colleagues, leaders and Albertans shows just how valuable and appreciated you are now and every day.

Community Acts of Kindness

In recognition of National Nurses Week, Chief Dale McFee presented a stylized Canadian flag on behalf of Edmonton Police, to nurses at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. The flag was crafted by two of the hundreds of grateful members of the Edmonton Police Service, honoring fellow [frontline](#) responders, whose sacrifice and commitment have seen us through this unprecedented crisis. Chief McFee was

joined by Natasha Gougeon, RN, Indigenous Wellness Clinic, Rochelle Walker, RN, UNA and Anita Loughran, LPN, AUPE.



As we head into another weekend in our COVID-19 crisis, we know you may be tired and looking forward to some downtime. For those who are on shift over the coming days, we thank you for work and hope you also find some time to refresh and rejuvenate.

Thank you for all you have done this week and for the past months to manage COVID-19 in our province. You are making a difference. We echo little Ryker's sentiments, as we celebrate our collective success in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and ask that you continue to stay safe.

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