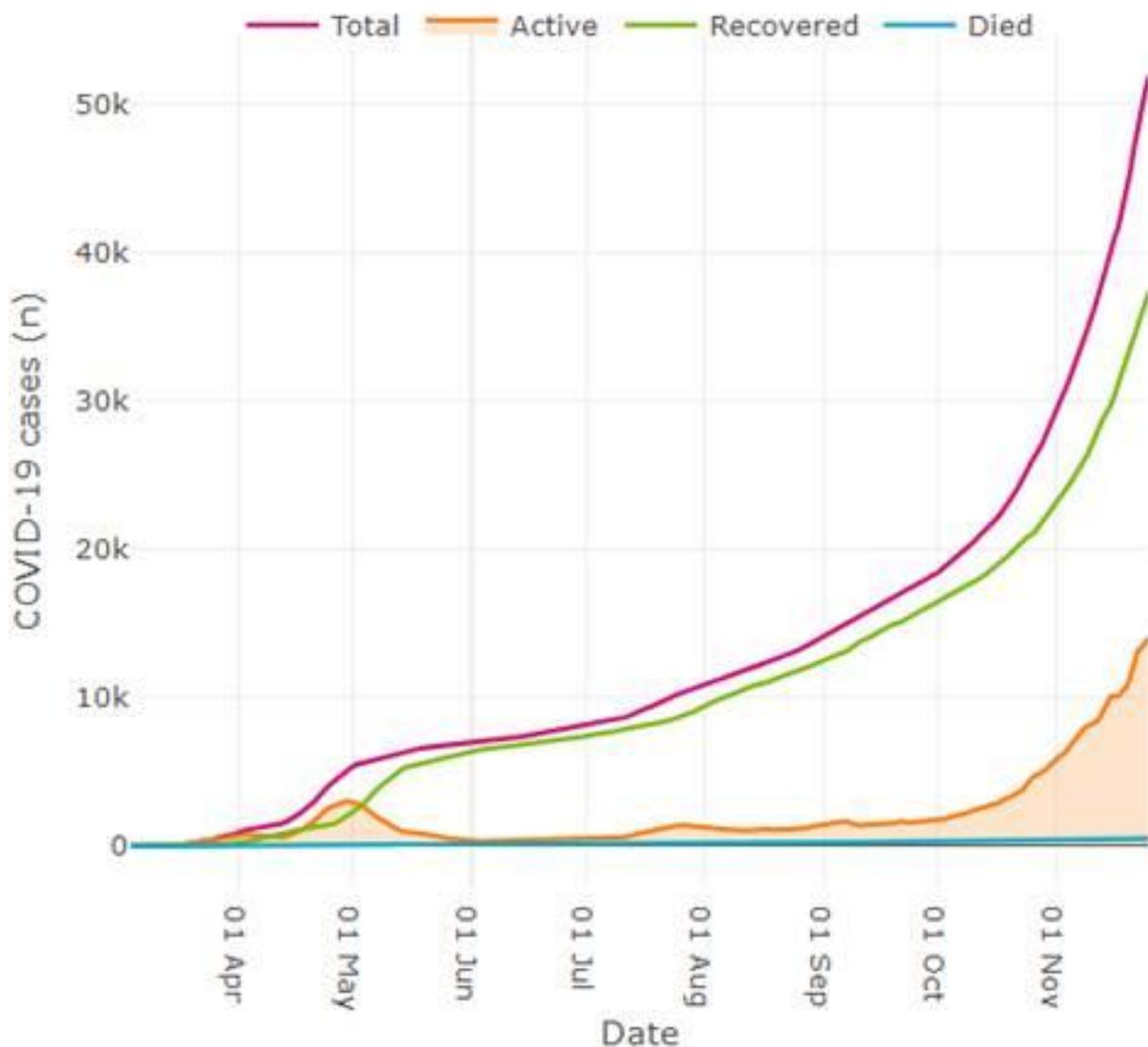


COVID-19 Status

November 27, 2020

For the first time, Alberta reported more than 1,000 new cases of COVID-19 every day over the past week, as active case numbers, hospitalizations and ICU admissions all continued to rise.

There was an average of 1,295 daily new cases for the week ending on Nov. 25, compared to 912 cases the previous week, a 42 per cent increase. The province also reported a record 1,569 new cases on Saturday, Nov. 21. As of Nov. 25, there are 14,052 active cases in the province. All zones reported an increase in active cases this past week, with Central Zone experiencing an 86 per cent increase from the previous week. Edmonton Zone has the most active cases with 6,444 as of Nov. 25, compared to 4,388 active cases the previous week, a 47 per cent increase.



The table below shows the number of active cases for the previous and present week for each zone:

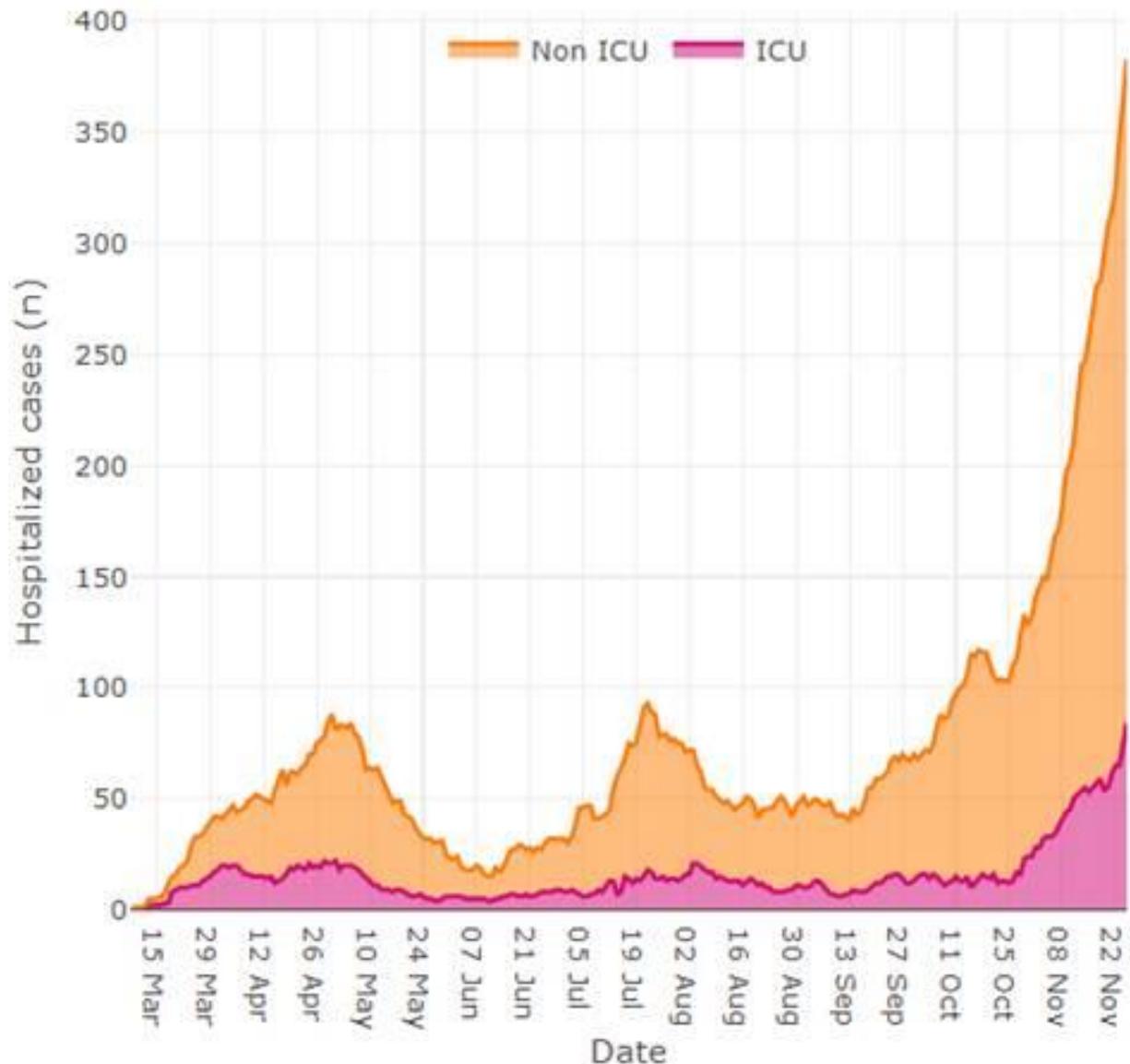
	Active Cases (week ending Nov.25)	Active Cases (week ending Nov. 18)	Per Cent Increase
Edmonton	6,444	4,388	47%
Calgary	5,126	4,219	22%
Central	947	508	86%
North	789	658	20%
South	664	540	23%
Unknown	82	69	19%

From Nov. 19 to Nov. 25, there were 4,953 cases among individuals aged 20 to 49 years, which is 55 per cent of all new cases. There were 1,249 cases among individuals aged 60 years and older; several of these cases are associated with outbreaks in long-term care facilities.

Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

As of Nov. 25, there are 383 individuals being treated in Alberta hospitals for COVID-19, with 84 in intensive care units (ICUs) — both are all-time highs. This is also a 35 per cent increase in total hospital admissions from the previous week ending Nov. 18.

The province introduced additional public health measures this week to respond to COVID-19 spread, and to protect the health of Albertans and the capacity of the healthcare system. See our Wrapping Up item at the bottom of this email for details on these measures.



Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- As of Nov. 25, a total of 51,878 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and a total of 1,713 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 3.3 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 37,316 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of Nov. 25, 510 Albertans have died from COVID-19, including 59 in the past week. We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- In the past week, 121,113 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 17,302 per day. A record number of tests was reached this past weekend with 19,484 and 19,486 tests performed on Nov. 21 and Nov. 22, respectively. The daily positivity rate was above six per cent for the entire week of Nov. 19 to Nov. 25, and hit a record of 8.34 per cent on Nov. 23. A total of 2,173,038 tests have been conducted as of Nov 25.

- As of Nov. 26, AHS has confirmed 2,231 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. Currently, 752 out of 2,415 schools in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission. Since September, 21 students from Alberta schools have been hospitalized for COVID-19.

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 Nov. 25:

- 65,844 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 1,749 (or 2.67 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 842 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 279 (or 33.1 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 907 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,215 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 86 (or 2.04 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 44 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, seven (or 15.9 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 42 physicians who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

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

Acute Care Capacity Increase Planning

As case numbers continue to rise, including rates of hospitalizations and ICU admissions, we are increasing capacity across the health system to provide care spaces for patients with COVID-19.

Over the next several weeks, approximately 2,250 acute care beds and 425 ICU beds will be allocated for patients with COVID-19 across the province if needed. In some cases, these will be new beds and, in other cases, these beds are existing hospital spaces that will be made available as patients are moved into continuing care beds in the community. We are also repurposing other clinical areas to provide ICU care.

In order to allocate these acute and ICU beds, we will also be working with Alberta Health, continuing care operators and other partners to open additional continuing care beds in the community. Some of this capacity work involves transferring patients out of acute care or moving patients within the province and also continuing to reduce services such as ambulatory care and surgery to reduce non-COVID-19 bed and staffing needs. Each zone is creating a specific plan to increase capacity; watch for zone-specific communication updates in the next few days.

We recognize this pandemic has and continues to cause immense strain not just on the healthcare system but on staff as well. As we address surge capacity concerns, we are advancing aggressive recruitment and staffing strategies to ensure we are able to staff the beds.

These efforts include expediting access to potential supply pools, including retirees and students as well as working with Alberta companies that may have suitable and available workforces. We are also increasing hours for trained part-time and casual staff and redeploying trained staff to other areas, so the most critical areas of care are covered.

At the heart of our response to COVID-19 is all of you. We know how long the hours are, how high staff stress levels have risen. We want to remind staff about our [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) and we hope that our ongoing efforts to recruit and increase staffing levels will provide some much-needed and deserved relief.

APL and Partners to Pilot Point-of-Care Rapid Testing Next Month

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) will begin piloting point-of-care rapid testing for COVID-19 in clinical settings next month, providing Albertans with faster, more convenient testing for the disease.

Over the last few months, the medical teams at APL have been working to evaluate the effectiveness of two different COVID-19 testing kits, which have been approved by Health Canada and provided to provinces and territories by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

In the coming weeks, these two point-of-care rapid testing systems will be rolled out in clinical pilots at several sites throughout the province, including in Calgary, Edmonton, Slave Lake, St. Paul and Bonnyville.

The tests will be used for patients who are within the first seven days of exhibiting symptoms, enabling APL to quickly identify positive cases at testing sites, reducing the need for patient samples to be transported to centralized public laboratories for processing.

APL is also working on expanding the use of point-of-care testing in other locations where it can be of the greatest value for public health authorities to manage COVID-19, such as homeless shelters and long-term care facilities.

Updates to Visitation during Outbreak and High Community Transmission

This week AHS made changes to designated family support and visitation guidelines at acute care facilities on outbreak and in communities where [COVID-19 transmission is high](#).

These changes include:

- Only one designated family/support person is permitted under [specific circumstances](#) for patients admitted to hospital.
- In addition, there is guidance for specific patient care areas:
 - Maternity and postpartum: one designated family/support person is permitted. A doula or a surrogate, in addition to the designated family/support person, will be allowed when this is part of a birth plan and the facility has the ability to support this safely.
 - Pediatrics and NICU: up to two designated family/support persons are permitted.

- Critical care: up to two designated family/support persons are permitted.
- End-of-life: one designated family/support person. The presence of visitors must be pre-arranged with the site/unit.
- Ambulatory (outpatient): one designated family/support person, where possible.
- Emergency department: one designated family/support person, where possible.

The extent of restrictions will vary site-to-site due to patient circumstances, operational considerations and ability to maintain physical distancing. We recognize these restrictions are difficult for patients, families, loved ones, staff and physicians. These are temporary measures to help reduce the exposure and spread of COVID-19.

Additionally, we are encouraging staff, patients/residents, and designated family/support persons to work together to reduce the amount of time spent in AHS facilities by considering what support needs to be provided in person and what can be provided virtually. Two brochures have been created for patients, residents and support persons to review: [Know Your Risk](#) and [Know Your Role](#).

More information is available at ahs.ca/visitation.

Contact Tracing Adjustments Aim to Reduce Backlog

With the significant increase in new COVID-19 cases over the past several weeks, AHS has made adjustments to our contact tracing process to keep up with demand and reduce the current backlog of Albertans waiting for a follow-up call.

Effective Nov. 24, AHS is no longer calling Albertans to conduct case investigation and contact tracing if 10 days have passed since their symptom onset or since the date of their COVID-19 swab, dependent on which information is available. Instead, this group will receive a text message that will notify them to not expect a call AND provide them with guidance on if and when their isolation period has ended.

In addition, to further reduce this backlog now and going forward, all Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 will receive a text message to notify them when their isolation period has ended.

AHS has automated this release-from-isolation service to enable contact tracers to spend their time contacting Albertans where we can have the greatest impact on preventing transmission and serious outcomes. Previously, AHS contact tracers made these release-from-isolation calls personally.

The text messages sent in both situations outlined above are similar and will provide a link to ahs.ca/isolation on the AHS website for more information on isolation requirements, testing options, symptoms and supports available.

Changes to Online Assessment Tool

Public health will have a new, streamlined way to help anyone connected with an outbreak throughout the province with changes coming to the online assessment tool. Effective Nov. 30, Albertans who are connected to an outbreak will be given an outbreak (EI) number and then directed to book an appointment for a COVID-19 test through the AHS online assessment tool. The linkage through an EI number will reduce the workload of CDC and Health Link, and will allow public health to monitor the outbreaks more efficiently.

PPE Update — We Have You Covered

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is key to protecting healthcare workers, who are vital to Alberta's COVID-19 response. We want to provide staff and physicians across the province assurance that we will continue to equip care teams with the PPE they need to respond during this pandemic.

AHS has advanced procurement and supply chain processes in place and has had great success securing large quantities of PPE to help manage the demand and flow to our front-line staff, as well as to community providers and sites. We continue to be in a good position to provide the care Albertans need, while keeping our front-line care teams safe, by maintaining a stockpile of ready-to-use PPE and monitoring our supply status every day. This supply includes gloves, masks, isolation gowns, N95 respirators, goggles and face shields. Regular updates are provided to the Executive Leadership Team and the PPE Task Force to ensure supply and demand needs are addressed.

AHS is also committed to providing ongoing guidance regarding the appropriate selection and use of PPE, based on a Point of Care Risk Assessment completed by every healthcare provider, for every patient interaction, as outlined in our [Joint Agreement](#). A guidance update will be sent in the coming days – stay tuned.

The [Provincial PPE Safety Coach Program](#) will help ensure clarity and consistency across the province and instill confidence in our staff that they are protected and have access to supplies when needed.

For more information, please visit our [PPE page](#).

Verna's Weekly Video Message — Vaccine on the Horizon

Nearly nine months have passed since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Alberta. We know this pandemic has been difficult for us all, and we thank each and every one of you for your compassion and dedication.

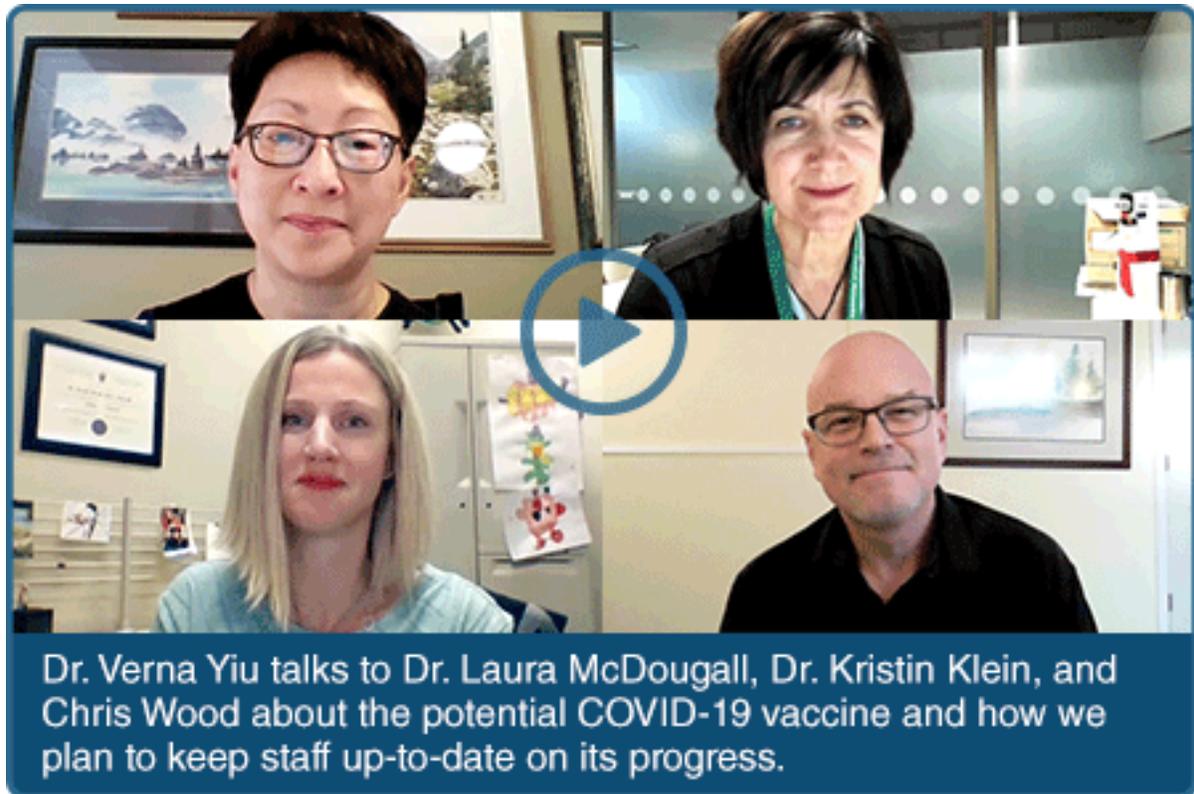
And now there is some promising news on the horizon.

Last week, the drug maker Moderna announced its COVID-19 vaccine is 94.5 per cent effective. That follows Pfizer's announcement that its vaccine candidate was found to be more than 95 per cent effective in preventing COVID-19.

Joining me to talk more about the [potential COVID-19 vaccine and what the next steps might be](#) are:

- Dr. Laura McDougall, Senior Medical Officer of Health.
- Dr. Kristin Klein, Medical Officer of Health, Provincial Population and Public Health.
- Chris Wood, Executive Director, Communicable Disease Control, Provincial Population and Public Health.

Laura, Kristin and Chris discuss what goes into making sure vaccines are safe and effective, what we can adapt from other immunization campaigns, and how we plan to keep staff up-to-date on the vaccine's progress.



Straight Talk From You — ‘You Need to Just Stay Home’

Straight Talk is a video series in which healthcare workers talk from the heart about what they’re seeing and experiencing at work and in their communities as COVID-19 spreads across the province. AHS is posting a new Straight Talk video every day on YouTube and sharing it through our AHS accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Please feel free to share these with your networks and on your social platforms as you see appropriate.

Here is another Straight Talk video, featuring Trista Bernier, a social worker at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton.



“I wish that people would just take things more seriously,” says Bernier. “You need to just stay home. I know it’s hard, it’s affecting people’s mental health greatly. But we basically are in this together and we have to get through it together.”

You can see all of the [Straight Talk videos](#), and new ones daily, on the AHS website.

Photo of the Week — Community paramedic

We wish to highlight a photo every week that illustrates your efforts, compassion and achievements as we respond to the pandemic and support Albertans who come to us for care.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, community paramedics like Natalie Walker continue to work with physicians and care teams to bring care to patients who need it most, where they need it most.

To see all our AHS photos, visit our [Instagram Gallery](#) on the AHS website.

Influenza Immunization Update

Nearly 1.3 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta, an increase of more than 62,000 doses from last week. For the fifth consecutive week, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta. The weekly influenza data report is available at ahs.ca/influenza.

For staff, check [Insite](#) for options to get the flu shot, [resources](#) to support this year's campaign and guidance on what to do if you experience [influenza-like symptoms after immunization](#).

More on clinics for the public, including your families is available on the [AHS website](#). And, if you got your flu shot at a [public health clinic](#), pharmacy or doctor's office, please complete the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#).

Save the Date — President's Speaker Series

Early on in this pandemic, we asked our staff who could do so to work from home in order to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect our people and the health system.

While this arrangement can offer benefits such as reduced commuting and greater flexibility, there are also potential drawbacks. Work-life balance challenges, social isolation and fewer opportunities to connect, to name a few.

On Dec. 9 from noon to 1 p.m., you're invited to join an online discussion on the latest findings on working remotely at the [President's Speaker Series](#). Our keynote speaker is Dr. Tom O'Neill, Director of Individual Team Performance Lab and Associate Professor/Head of Industrial-Organizational Psychology at the University of Calgary.

In his presentation, Dr. O'Neill will share the latest findings on the myths and realities of working remotely, and how we can prepare for the future of workplaces in a post-COVID-19 world.

Email pss@ahs.ca to register.

Introducing AHS Zoom Backgrounds

During this pandemic, many AHS meetings have moved from in-person to online. For those using Zoom, you might have noticed some people have installed backgrounds to use in their video calls.

With that in mind, we have developed some AHS-themed backgrounds you can use in Zoom. We hope they will help you feel more connected to each other as we remain physically distant. The images include our facilities, the beautiful landscapes of Alberta, COVID-19 messaging, and backgrounds featuring the AHS penguin.

Visit [Insite](#) to see the available backgrounds and learn how you can use them in Zoom. We plan to add more backgrounds in the future, so check back often – and please share your suggestions on what backgrounds you'd like to see by emailing our.ahs@ahs.ca.



[Download an AHS Zoom Background](#)

Celebrate the Season with Secret Santa

We know the pandemic prevents us from getting together in person as we normally would to celebrate the season with our coworkers. We hope you'll join in the fourth annual [AHS Secret Santa Holiday Card Exchange](#) as a way to share well wishes and gratitude with one another. This year, in honour of all of the ways we've learned to connect virtually, we're adding an e-Card option to go alongside our traditional print card option.

You can buy a card, make your own, or print one from our template library, which includes a diverse and inclusive lineup of cards. We also have a [variety of e-Cards](#) you can choose from. Don't forget to include a personal message with your card.



I (Verna) will be sharing the card I get on social media, and I hope you do the same. Post a photo of your card on social media using the hashtag #AHSsecretSanta and make sure you tag @AHS_media.

Make sure to [sign up](#) by Dec. 4, and put your print card (with postage) in the mail by Dec. 10 to ensure your match receives it in time for the holidays. If you are doing an e-Card, please send it by Dec. 17.



Be Well - Be Kind

Impacts of COVID-19 on Healthcare Workers: Share your Perspective

Statistics Canada is conducting a survey to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on Canadian healthcare workers, with a focus on access to personal protective equipment and infection prevention and control measures in the workplace.

This is a collaboration between Statistics Canada, Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Canadian Institute for Health Information. The information collected will help to inform the delivery of healthcare services, and to better understand what healthcare workers need in terms of equipment, training and support.

This is a voluntary questionnaire and whether you provide direct healthcare services to individuals, technical support to medical staff, or other services in a healthcare setting, they would like to hear from you. Click the [link](#) if you'd like to take a few minutes to participate.

The survey is open from Nov. 24 to Dec. 13, 2020, and is conducted under the authority of the Statistics Act, which ensures the information you provide will be kept confidential, and used only for statistical and research purposes. Statistics Canada is expected to publish results early next year. More information about the survey can be found at the [Statistics Canada web page](#).

Registered Nurse's Poem Captures This Moment in Time

This past week, we were sent a beautiful poem written by AHS registered nurse Jacqueline Simms. Her words capture this moment in time as well as the efforts of front-line healthcare workers. We'd like to share with you Jacqueline's poem, Behind the Mask, and her explanation for its inspiration:

Simms: "As I reflect on nursing practice in this COVID-19 context, I am in awe of the nursing discipline. Below is a poem I wrote after my reflection."

Behind the Mask

*Behind the mask, we are here.
We see your pain and feel your fear.
We do what we can to keep us all safe and well.
To not be unable to touch each other, sometimes can feel like hell.*

*This pandemic hit us, with a whisper and then a shout.
Information is shared, until we are told we cannot go out.
Behind the mask, we complete the shift.
PPE in demand, to care is a nurse's gift.*

*We are in this together, we are not alone.
We are told to connect at a distance, use Internet, Facebook, Google or phone.*

*Behind the mask, we continue to care
We are stronger than this virus, we will not live in fear.*

*Years ago, a brave nurse told us all to wash our hands.
So many years later, Florence Nightingale's words still spread across all lands.*

*We are acknowledged and honoured: they call us heroes, clang pots at shift change and blow
a car horn.*

*We are thankful, as we care for the suffering as best we can, and when someone dies, we all
mourn.*

*We see success so this pandemic will slowly come to an end.
The fear will not last, and our world will need to mend.*

We are nurses and we will care, despite the challenges, we are here.

Behind the mask, we are here.

Sharing the Love — Words of Appreciation from PFG

During a recent Patient and Family Advisory Group meeting, council members were asked to choose words of support and love for healthcare professionals who have supported Albertans during the COVID-19 pandemic. [PFG gathered these words of support alongside images from our front-line healthcare workers](#) in a document we're pleased to share with you. "As a reflection of Albertans, our team put together the attached and I'm excited to pass it on to you in the hopes that it makes you

smile (and) you find some small amount of comfort in the words within,” says PFG volunteer co-chair Dean Radbourne.



AHS PATIENT & FAMILY ADVISORY GROUP (PFG)

Words of Gratitude

Gratitude from Albertans

Everything you and your colleagues do every day to provide safe quality care to all Albertans is being noticed. Messages of gratitude keep pouring in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to share a few recent messages of thanks with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

What a great job you are all doing. What was a very scary time for our family was treated quickly and efficiently. From booking to testing to results, I am very impressed. Thank you!

— Anonymous

Thank you so much for providing key service to northern Alberta when it's needed most. On top of 24-hour service, you have been able to keep short wait times to provide key medical advice to the residents of Edmonton and the surrounding area. Your service has helped to save so many lives and its impact will be remembered for decades.

— Anonymous

Thank you so much for your service. I know that this is a troubling time, especially for healthcare workers, but your sacrifices are truly making a difference. Ever since I was a child, it has been my dream to be a doctor and you inspire me more to achieve my dream.

— Anonymous

It's been so ongoing and the challenges keep unfolding. I just wanted to say thank you to everyone on all levels who are stepping in to help keep us as healthy as you can.

— Lynn

Thank you for all your work and efforts, especially during COVID-19. You are greatly appreciated!

— Nicole Furlan

Wrapping Up — Additional Public Health Measures

This week brought additional public health measures from government to protect the health of Albertans and the capacity of the healthcare system. As healthcare workers, let's make sure we adhere to these measures ourselves and encourage our families, friends and neighbours to do the same.

For those who didn't hear about the new measures, they call for:

- No indoor social gatherings, public or private, and no more than 10 people at outdoor social gatherings.
- Maximum of 10 people for wedding ceremonies and funeral services. This does not include staff or organizers who are not considered invited guests. Receptions are not permitted.
- Mandatory masking in all indoor workplaces in Calgary, Edmonton and surrounding areas.
- Restricted capacity to 25 per cent of the occupancy set under the Alberta Fire Code in communities under an enhanced status for most retail businesses and for some entertainment and event services.
- No more than six people, all of whom must be from the same immediate household, at a table in restaurants, bars, pubs and lounges — and no movement between tables.
- A move to at-home learning, starting Monday, for all students in Grades 7 to 12, with a resumption of in-person learning starting on Jan. 11. K-6 students will move to in-home learning after the winter break until Jan. 8, resuming in-person classes on Jan. 11.
- Ending in-person service in regions under enhanced status for banquet halls, conference centres, trade shows, concert venues, children's play places, indoor playgrounds and all levels of team and individual sport.

You can learn more about these and other additional public health measures at alberta.ca/covid19.

We also must continue to adhere to, and promote, existing public health measures that we surely all know by heart by now: wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water, or hand sanitizer; do not touch your face with unclean hands; wear a mask in public places; maintain two metres of physical distancing from people not in your cohort; limit your social bubble — and, if you haven't already, get your seasonal influenza immunization. By keeping the number of influenza cases low, we are doing our part to help healthcare workers focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, please take care of yourselves and each other. This has been a long, hard year and much of what we've faced is out of our control. However, we can choose to give ourselves and each other permission to be human. Not healthcare heroes. Human. Humans who get tired. Humans who can get grumpy. Humans who are never perfect all the time. Human who need to cry, need a hug, need a laugh, or need help and support from others at some point. Give yourselves permission to be all that; be kind, generous and forgiving to yourself and others. It's nice being called a healthcare hero — and

your efforts have been truly heroic — but please know being human and bringing that humanity to work is more than enough.

As always, with gratitude and appreciation,

*****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 AHS - Provincial Indigenous Wellness Core

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