

COVID-19 Status

MAY 5, 2020

We have confirmed 70 new cases of COVID-19 over the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 5,836. Of the total cases, we suspect 733 cases may be from unknown exposure (acquired in the community from unknown sources), 238 have been hospitalized and 52 have been in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Currently, there are 89 cases in hospital, with 21 in an ICU. 2,942 cases have now recovered.

3,527 tests were completed over the last 24 hours, bringing our total COVID-19 tests to 164,772 since the start of the pandemic. This aggressive testing approach is helping us to identify cases early, and prevent the spread

We must report the sad news of nine additional deaths recorded in the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 104 lives lost in Alberta related to COVID-19. Passing 100 deaths total in Alberta, is a sombre milestone, as noted by Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, today. Every one of these individuals was loved and valued, and we grieve alongside their families and loved ones, as we continue to do all we can to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our province. This is a serious reminder of why we must continue to fight together to manage COVID-19. We have not beaten it and it is not going away any time soon. We cannot lose our focus on maintaining the health guidelines and protocols we've put in place. These are essential to protecting as many Albertans as we can and reducing the severe impact of this illness.

Things You Need to Know

Updated Testing Criteria

Effective May 4, AHS is expanding the list of symptoms for which Albertans can schedule a COVID-19 test. This reflects Alberta's strong testing capacity, and our ability to increase that capacity even further.

Previously those Albertans experiencing the following symptoms were tested for COVID-19. Anyone who has these symptoms **MUST [self-isolate](#)** for a minimum 10 days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.

- Fever
- A new cough or a chronic cough that is worsening
- New shortness of breath or chronic shortness of breath that is worsening
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Runny nose

Albertans who have any of the following symptoms are also now eligible to be tested for COVID-19. Those with these symptoms are not required to self-isolate, but it is strongly advised that they stay home and minimize contact with others until they are feeling better.

- Chills
- Painful swallowing
- Stuffy nose
- Headache
- Muscle/joint ache
- Feeling unwell/fatigue/severe exhaustion
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea/unexplained loss of appetite
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)

These increased symptom list has been incorporated into both of our online [Self-Assessment Tools](#) - the one for the public and the one for Healthcare & Shelter Workers/Enforcement Personnel/First Responders.

AHS is proud of the work of our teams to provide some of the highest rates of testing in the world. We believe that this high level of testing is important to ensuring that AHS, and the Government of Alberta, is able to make evidence-based public health decisions. Continuing this high level of testing will allow us to identify new cases quickly and help contain COVID-19 in Alberta as we begin to re-open the province.

Resuming Scheduled Surgeries and Procedures

To prepare for the anticipated demands of COVID-19, AHS postponed all non-urgent surgeries and procedures over the past weeks. This has allowed us to create capacity within our acute care sites, and free up our healthcare teams to care for the patients who need us urgently during this pandemic.

Today, we have resumed non-urgent scheduled day surgeries and procedures. We know that these changes require AHS teams across the province to be nimble and flexible as we adapt our space, services and plans to the needs of Albertans. We also know the work you are doing to adjust to this changing landscape is significant. We sincerely thank all our staff and physicians who have been continually ready to provide the care that's needed.

Today, the following surgeries and procedures are being performed (numbers are approximate):

- 110 surgeries in the Calgary Zone
- 30 surgeries in Edmonton Zone
- 20 in the North Zone

There are 20 surgeries planned in the South Zone, and 20 in the Central Zone throughout the week.

As we move forward, the plan is to complete approximately 26,000-30,000 surgeries over the next six weeks, which is between 70 to 81 per cent of our typical volume. This will include 9,000 to 13,000 scheduled procedures, as well as 17,000 urgent or emergent procedures. Typically, we provide 37,000 surgeries over a six -week period, including scheduled, urgent and emergent procedures.

Our focus in these first two weeks are on day surgeries in both AHS and Chartered Surgical Facilities (CSF). These will include cataracts, gynecological procedures, general day surgery, nose surgery, reconstructive plastic surgery, and vascular and urology procedures. Decisions on which surgeries will proceed are being made at the zone level, and will be informed by the pandemic response in different parts of the province.

The Government of Alberta has also [announced a plan](#) to lift some restrictions on some allied health services. Dental and other regulated healthcare workers such as physiotherapists, speech language pathologists, respiratory therapists, audiologists, social workers, occupational therapists, dieticians and more can resume services, as long as they follow approved guidelines set by their professional colleges.

The safety of patients and staff within our facilities continues to be our priority, as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The resumption of any services will be done in a cautious, phased approach with rigorous adherence to all the public measures intended to reduce the risk of COVID-19 for both patients and staff. This includes helping to ensure those with symptoms stay home, maintaining physical distancing as much as possible throughout our sites, using appropriate PPE and the frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces.

We thank the staff and physicians who were redeployed from surgical services during the surgical postponement to support other areas. Your willingness to provide your skills and expertise to support the areas of greatest need is so appreciated. These teams are now being returned to their previous areas of work, wherever possible.

We recognize these adaptations have meant a great deal of rapid change for the affected AHS teams. As we continue to focus on the needs of Albertans and providing high-quality care throughout this pandemic, we will also continue to do our best to support our staff and physicians throughout these changes. Thank you again for the extraordinary care you provide to patients and families every day.

AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing

Statistics provide the total number of AHS employees and physicians tested, including a breakdown on the number of positive tests and those who have been confirmed to have been exposed in the workplace. We continue to provide these statistics to Alberta Health, which

also [reports](#) on the total number of individuals tested in the province. Alberta Health's reporting of healthcare worker statistics is based on self-declarations at the time of testing, which indicate that the individual is a healthcare worker. These self-declared individuals perform a wide variety of healthcare roles with other healthcare employers in the province, so the number of tests will be greater than the AHS total.

As of May 1:

- 16,187 AHS employees have been tested for COVID-19, and of those tested, 149 (or 0.92%) have tested positive.
- Of the 149 employees who have tested positive, 19 (or 12.8%) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with 19 of the 149 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).
- 976 AHS physicians have been tested for COVID-19 and of those tested, 22 (or 2.25%) have tested positive.
- Of the 22 physicians who have tested positive, none have been confirmed to have acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with 1 of the 22 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).

AHS will continue to provide these statistics as we monitor our response and the impact to AHS healthcare workers. We thank our healthcare workers for their excellent attention to hand hygiene, personal protective equipment, and other controls available to them, as we continue to work together to limit workplace exposure and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

N95 Recycling Update

Beginning April 14th, Alberta Health Services implemented the process of collecting used 3M 1870+ model N95 respirators for decontamination and storing. This is a contingency plan that will allow the preservation of respirators for potential reuse, if additional supply is required in the months ahead.

Initial implementation was focused upon the AHS Intensive Care Units in the Calgary and Edmonton Zones, collecting the most widely used respirator model 1870-plus.

The manufacturer, 3M, has approved Vaporized Hydrogen Peroxide (VHP) as one of the methods of decontamination, a form of sterilization for compatible N95 Filtering Facepiece Particulate Respirators. AHS has these sterilizer systems in the medical device reprocessing departments in acute care hospitals throughout Alberta and is utilizing them to support this conservation effort.

As planned, the preservation of 3M N95 respirators will expand to collect all compatible models of 3M respirators extending to clinical areas such as the Operating Room, Emergency Department and inpatient units within all AHS zones. Calgary and Edmonton Zones will expand

their collection this week. The remaining zones will begin the collection and decontamination of 3M N95 respirators in the coming weeks. Watch ahs.ca/covidppe for updates on this.

PPE Tip of the Day

Our daily tips feature quick and simple reminders you can make part of your practice, from shift to shift.

High Touch Surfaces/shared objects:

These include computer keyboards and mouse, as well as phones.

Protect yourself by cleaning multi-use objects/ multi-touch surfaces before use.

Protect others by cleaning multi-use objects/ multi-touch surfaces after you use them.

Witnessing Wills and Personal Directives

There has been an increase in requests for AHS staff to witness the signing of wills, personal directives (PD) and enduring powers of attorney (EPOA) for patients and families. To this end, AHS has developed a guidance document to assist AHS social workers and other healthcare providers in their role in witnessing legal and personal documents.

This [guidance document](#) contains information on factors to consider if a patient requests a health care professional witness any of these personal documents, as well as the process for lawyers to access AHS sites to provide legal services to patients and clients. The guidance document also contains links to important resources, including the [Personal and Financial Decision Making Toolkit for Frontline Staff](#), for staff to consult when choosing to witness a PD, EPOA or other personal document.

Guidance for Food from External Sources

To continue to ensure the health and safety of our staff and patients, Nutrition Food Linen and Environmental Services (NFLES) has created a [guidance document](#) for staff bringing food to AHS sites for personal consumption. This includes both food brought from home, or from external sources such as take-out or delivery. While we discourage all Albertans from sharing food or beverages at this time, the guidance document also outlines steps to lower the risk if staff choose to share external food with one or more staff members. We continue to remind all staff not to accept donated food for personal consumption, or to distribute donated food to other AHS staff.

In the Zones

Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update – South

The dedicated and tireless work of South Zone Environmental Public Health (EPH) Inspectors has proven invaluable in making sure communities across the zone are fully informed and engaged in our response to the ongoing pandemic.

As confirmed COVID-19 cases began to increase across the zone, municipalities have been requesting AHS support in their Emergency Coordination Centers. In every case, community based inspectors have made themselves available for those meetings and worked with the municipality and Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) Field Officers.

This team has kept lines of communication open and helped to strengthen relationships between AHS and the communities we serve, which has proved critical in adapting to evolving situations. So far, EPH has reported back from 70 community meetings throughout the zone, which has allowed the entire region to move forward as a cohesive group.

Be Well - Be Kind

AHS Fit Fam

Staying active and fit is important physically and mentally, and perhaps especially important to maintain balance and overall good health throughout this pandemic. With changes to our typical activities and routines, and gyms and studios closed, we know that many of you have gotten creative when it comes to how and where you work out, and what you do to find balance in your day.

Saying Thanks for the #FoundationsofGratitude Campaign

Today, we shared this [video message](#) with our foundation partners to thank those who have participated in the #FoundationsofGratitude campaign. Through this campaign, 24 of our partners have come together to show their appreciation for healthcare professionals and support staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This foundation-led initiative asks Albertans to create and place hearts in their windows at home, and sharing images of their “HEARTwork” and messages of support online, using the social media tag #FoundationsofGratitude. To date, dozens of positive messages have been shared to demonstrate support for AHS’ teams. Messages have ranged from short videos, to sidewalk chalk art, and “heart” murals in windows.

We know this is an incredibly challenging time for many of you, and we hope you take inspiration from the messages and artwork shared through #FoundationsofGratitude. Thank you for everything that you’re doing to serve Albertans throughout our response.

We also say thanks again to our foundation and auxiliary partners for this campaign. Words cannot describe how much we appreciate your leadership and participation in #FoundationsofGratitude. Thank you for taking part—and for all your contributions—especially during this difficult time.

For more information on #FoundationsofGratitude, visit ahs.ca/foundationsofgratitude.



The Hamm Family shows off their “HEARTwork” as part of the recently launched #FoundationsofGratitude campaign. This foundation-led initiative encourages Albertans to place hearts in their windows and share positive messages online for our healthcare professionals and support staff during the COVID-19 response.

Health Philanthropy Month Launches Today

This year’s Health Philanthropy Month campaign is launching today and will run throughout the month of May. In light of COVID-19, we’re focusing on expressing our gratitude to our foundation and auxiliary partners. Through donor support, these partners fund enhancements to healthcare delivery, including equipment, programs, renovations, research and education across the province and in your communities. This work continues throughout the COVID-19 response, as we partner with them on supporting immediate needs in their communities.

If you would like to stay up to date on our Health Philanthropy Month plans, please check AHS’ social media feeds, the daily all-staff emails, and our [foundation stories page](#).

#GivingTuesdayNow Takes Place Tomorrow

Charities across the world are celebrating [#GivingTuesdayNow](#) as a global day of giving and unity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. People can show their generosity in a variety of ways to participate in [#GivingTuesdayNow](#) – whether it’s helping a neighbour, sharing a skill or giving to causes, every act of generosity counts.

We truly appreciate everything our communities, our foundation and auxiliary partners, and their donors, are doing to enhance care for our patients and their families.

If you wish to donate to our foundation partners, please visit ahs.ca/give to make a direct donation, or learn how to donate vacation days to either a foundation or the United Way, through AHS’ COVID-19 Relief Fund Initiative [here](#).



Shout Out

We know that our staff and physicians provide high-quality care every day to our patients and clients. Today we are reminded that the care we provide is often so much more than what's included in a job description and is rooted in a deep compassion for the people we serve. Thank you to the member of our Facilities Maintenance and Engineering team, who is recognized in this shout out tonight. You made a difference to someone because you took the time to care in an exceptional way.

Community Acts of Kindness

This note and pictures are another reflection of the appreciation Albertans have for you, with a special mention for Alberta Precision Laboratories, today. Your efforts don't go unnoticed by our communities and they continue to express their gratitude in displays across Alberta, like these banners which have appeared on sculptures in Calgary. We will keep sharing the daily recognition we receive for your dedication, skill and expertise, because we know the days can be long and taxing, and we don't want to forget how Albertans feel about what you are doing. We are certainly aware that our staff and physicians are AHS' most precious resource. As we've mentioned before, we have also long suspected that you are superheroes, too.

Thank you and 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