

COVID-19 Status

May 4, 2020

We have confirmed 96 new cases of COVID-19 in Alberta over the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 5,766. Currently, 90 people with COVID-19 are in hospital and we are caring for 19 of them in an intensive care unit. The number of people who have recovered from COVID-19 in Alberta is 2,713. Of the total cases, we suspect 743 are from community transmission.

One more Albertan has died from COVID-19. While recent deaths are comparatively low, they continue to emphasize the toll the pandemic takes. In all, 95 Albertans have lost their lives. Our thoughts and condolences go once again to all who have lost a family member, friend, patient or resident to COVID-19.

Our focus on testing continues. Lab teams across the province have now tested 152,123 people and conducted a total of 161,245 tests. In the past 24 hours, we completed 3,728 tests.

In the weeks since our first case was discovered in Alberta, much has been learned about the virus circulating in our province. Details about COVID-19 cases can be found at alberta.ca/covid19, but some of the findings include:

- COVID-19 has affected every age group with the average age of 41.5 years.
- The most frequent symptom identified is a cough, with roughly 62 per cent of all cases reporting this.
- The next highest recorded symptoms in Alberta are sore throat at 33 per cent, followed by fever at 28 per cent.

Things You Need to Know

Government of Alberta Re-launch Strategy Update

Yesterday, the Government of Alberta announced its [re-launch strategy](#), which includes a phased approach to reopening business and recreational activities across the province. We have received many questions about what this means for AHS. In these early days, we are working closely with government to determine how this will impact our organization and our people.

While timing of the phases is not finalized, and will depend on many factors including monitoring our COVID-19 rates and the capacity of our healthcare system to respond, we will continue to provide updates as we know more. The safety of our people, patients and families will be a deciding factor as we move forward with implementing the relaunch strategy.

Alberta Health's Contact Tracing App

As part of its relaunch strategy, the Government of Alberta has launched a voluntary, secure mobile contact tracing application to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The [ABTraceTogether](#) app will enhance the current manual contact tracing process and help Albertans protect themselves and their loved ones. Contact tracing is currently performed by interviewing patients who have tested positive for COVID-19, which is resource intensive and relies on the patient's memory. Through wireless Bluetooth technology, mobile contact tracing will complement the work of healthcare workers and speed up the current manual tracing process. This means Albertans will be contacted more quickly if they are at risk.

Protecting Albertans' privacy is paramount. Use of the app is voluntary: users opt-in to participate. Only your phone number is collected at the time of registering the app. The application does not track the user's location and does not use your GPS. Data is only stored on the user's phone in an encrypted format for 21 days. Users consent to sharing their data if they have tested positive for COVID-19. Users must be within two metres of each other, for a total duration of 15 minutes in a 24-hour period, in order to be notified as a close contact.

The app is now available to download for free from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). More information about the app is available from the Government of Alberta, [here](#).

AHS COVID-19 Podcast – Contact Tracing

An army of healthcare sleuths are playing a major role in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Alberta. AHS' contact tracing team uses detective work to track down people who may have come into contact with COVID-19, in an effort to flatten the curve. This podcast [explains how this team follows the clues to reduce the spread](#).



Weekly Video Message from Verna

In my weekly address to staff and physicians, I (Verna) had the opportunity to talk with Gregory Cummings, Janice Stewart and Katherine Chubbs — the chief zone officers for the North, Central and South zones, respectively. We discussed the issues they're currently facing, including zone-specific challenges as they relate to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as flooding in the Fort McMurray and Fort Vermilion areas. Please take a moment to [watch the video](#) and find out more about all that's underway in these zones. Thank you Greg, Janice and Katherine for participating and for all the incredible work of you and your teams.



Learn Strategies to Manage Your Stress

We know this is a stressful time. Stress can leave you feeling overwhelmed, exhausted or even super human. Understanding how stress affects you is important—as is finding ways to cope with it.

Additional supports include:

- [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#)
- [Supporting Your Mental Health](#)
- [Wellness Check-in Overview](#)

Update on Field Hospital at Peter Lougheed Centre

Construction of a field hospital at the Peter Lougheed Centre (PLC) has been completed and is now available should additional hospital capacity be needed to meet increasing demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 766-square metre structure, officially called a Sprung Pandemic Response facility, took under three weeks to erect and equip just outside of the northeast Calgary hospital. In this [video](#), PLC Executive Director Karen Foudy, Health Minister Tyler Shandro and Phil Sprung, the president of Sprung Structures, which donated the structure, talk about the how the field hospital will be used during AHS' pandemic response and the teamwork required to have it built and fitted out in less than a month.



AHS COVID-19 Podcast – Alberta Precision Laboratories’ Key Role

As we conclude National Medical Laboratory week, AHS would like to thank Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) for all of their hard and important work supporting Albertans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this Alberta Health Services’ COVID-19 podcast, Dr. Carolyn O’Hara, Interim Chief Medical Laboratory Officer at Alberta Precision Laboratories, [talks about how APL continues to play a key role in supporting Albertans during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)



Mental Wellness Resources and COVID-19 Stigma

The Provincial Addiction and Mental Health team has developed several resources to address stress, anxiety and mental wellness during COVID-19. [Mobile Tools to Promote Mental Wellness](#) is a resource for service providers and the public, which highlights free evidenced-based mental wellness apps and questions to ask when choosing an app to use. [COVID-19 and Stigma](#) is a great resource for healthcare providers to help understand the stigma related to COVID-19 and how we can help stop it.

PPE Tips of the Day

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

Proper Removal of soiled gloves:

[Carefully lift up the base](#) of one glove and [pull it off your hand](#). Then use the ungloved hand to lift up the cuff of the remaining glove, pulling it forward and off your hand. Be careful to protect your exposed hands from the OUTSIDE of your gloves. Place the inside out gloves into the garbage followed by hand washing for 30 seconds.

Clean High-touch Personal Gear Often

Make a point of cleaning your personal equipment (such as pens, personal phones and stethoscopes) regularly with available cleaning wipes. Clean these items while wearing gloves, then remove the gloves and wash your hands.

Careful removal of soiled gloves:

ALWAYS [take off gloves](#) and [wash your hands](#) before removing any other piece of [PPE](#). Not doing this step first puts you at the highest risk of self-contamination during [PPE removal](#).


PPE Question of the Week – A New Weekly Feature




Your PPE Taskforce will bring you a new short video every Friday, which answers a burning question we've heard in our work with frontline health professionals each week. The weekly video will feature one question and the answer, straight from one of our PPE Taskforce members.

Today's [video](#) features Dr. Mark Joffe, chair of the PPE Taskforce, answering a question we have been hearing often:

What is the difference between an N95 respirator and a procedural / surgical / medical mask?

PPE Question of the Week

What's the difference between N95 Respirators and Surgical/Procedure/Medical masks? 

Dr. Mark Joffe answers PPE question of the week.

The video series will be available on the PPE webpage as well at ahs.ca/covidppe.

In the Zones

Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update – Virtual Patient Experience Visits Keeps Patients in Touch in Calgary Zone

Being alone in hospital can be lonely and scary at any time. It can be especially isolating now with visitor restrictions during COVID-19. Volunteer Resources and Patient & Family Centred Care in the Calgary Zone recently launched a program called [Virtual Patient Experience Visits](#).

Similar to the Patient Experience/Friendly Visitor visit already in place, the program pairs AHS volunteers with patients at risk of being socially isolated. But in this instance, each pair connects virtually. Their 15- to 30-minute visits are by phone or video call (such as FaceTime or Zoom).

Patients can use their own equipment (such as a cellphone, laptop or tablet) for the visit or Volunteer Services can lend them an iPad. Visits take place between 0900 and 1900 daily; equipment support is Monday to Friday between 0900 and 1500.

The virtual visits are expected to grow. Staff can refer their patients who could benefit for such a visit by completing a [referral form](#) from Patient & Family Centred Care. Visits are then arranged by local Calgary Zone Volunteer Resource offices. Volunteers visiting with patients are AHS-registered and trained.

One volunteer, Ivy, shared this comment from one of her patient visits: “It was great to visit with the patient. At the end of the conversation she left me with a gem of a statement. First, she thanked me for the visit and then said it was like ‘hanging over the fence’ for a chat. That was an absolute delight and something I will hang on to.”

To learn more or comment about Virtual Patient Experience Visits, contact the Calgary Zone Patient and Family Centred Care team at pfcc.calzone@ahs.ca.



During a virtual visit with Calgary volunteer Ivy (right), a patient said the call as like “hanging over the fence” for a chat.

Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update –Central

Much has changed in the weeks since the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Alberta. What has not changed, however, is the incredible spirit and commitment to healthcare, staff and physicians across the Central Zone continue to display.

We know that it has not been easy, but there is some positive news emerging as the relaunch strategies bring renewed hope that we will get to the other side of this pandemic.

A number of our pandemic response efforts continue in the zone, including the planning work on an alternative care centre where, if needed, care can be provided for up to 25 patients outside of a hospital setting. This centre would be a safe space for patients to receive short-term treatment or medical support in their recovery from COVID-19.

A multidisciplinary team of staff –including RNs, LPNs, physicians, allied health, addiction and mental Health, environmental public health and administrative professionals –would support the centre, in collaboration with local community agencies and municipal partners.

On the topic of collaboration and support, we also want to take a moment to recognize those who have stepped forward to support our colleagues in North Zone who have been faced with not only COVID-19, but spring flooding as well. From those who volunteered to be deployed to

help in healthcare facilities facing staffing shortages due to the pandemic, to those who have been working to support the temporary accommodation of relocated patients, we thank you for answering the call.

We also want to recognize the volunteers who continue to stay connected to sites, patients and residents, be it through window visits, video updates or good old fashioned letter writing.

Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update – Edmonton

In keeping with physical distancing guidelines, healthcare providers must deliver their services in different ways. Maternal Child Health in the Edmonton Zone has quickly adapted to the current environment and is now offering prenatal classes online. They quickly transitioned to the digital platform Zoom, with the help of Alberta Health Services' [Virtual Health](#).

Nurse educators have been experts in creating engaging sessions which cover various topics, including the signs and stages of labour, when to go to the hospital, breathing and relaxation, decision-making, medical procedures, breastfeeding, baby care and more. Fifteen parents have signed up so far and the group has cited good attendance and engagement since transferring to the online platform. Public health nurses with expertise in prenatal health and education, along with knowledgeable administrative support, are working together to design and deliver a valuable and engaging virtual prenatal education experience.

While the uncertainty of COVID-19 can cause some fear and anxiety for first time parents, Maternal Child Health is determined to alleviate any fears by being a trustworthy source of information.

In addition, the online platform removes financial, socioeconomic and transportation barriers and provides a welcoming space, while allowing families to remain in the comfort of their own home.

The group hopes to continue utilizing online platforms to deliver their services as families eventually transition into postpartum and immunization programs.

“Our goal is to help create healthy families,” says Ference. “Human interaction is important and we are trying to meet the changing needs of today’s parents in the digital age and keep them connected.”

Doctor’s Day

May 1 was Doctor’s Day. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Alberta’s physicians for the care they provide and the impact they have in the lives of patients and families, during the COVID-19 response, and every day.

Across the province, our people have gone above and beyond to keep Albertans safe and healthy, and our physicians are a brilliant example of that. Thank you for the difference you make every day. We value and appreciate you.

Be Well - Be Kind

Healthy Together

Healthy Sleep Habits Keep Us at Our Best

Family life (and work life) during a pandemic can be exhausting, yet sleep doesn't always come easy, or often enough. Changes, challenges, worries and disrupted routines can turn our sleep patterns upside down.

"Sleep is critical to your physical health and effective functioning of your immune system," says Laura Crawford. She's a program facilitator with Alberta Health Services' (AHS) Healthy Living team. "It's important for emotional wellness and mental health. Research has found getting good sleep helps reduce the risk of stress, depression and anxiety.

"These are unique times. It's easy to see why sleep routines have been flying under the radar for families," she adds.

Whether you had sleeping problems before COVID-19 or since, we offer concrete steps that can help you and your family sleep more soundly. See our [Sleeping & Napping story](#) for details.

Over 65? Staying Strong with Nutrition

Nutrition is important to everyone. It's even more so for older adults.

"Nutrition is a great way to help older adults stay physically and emotionally strong, which is helpful for immunity and overall health," says Marlis Atkins, a director with Nutrition Services at Alberta Health Services. She and her team advise Albertans of all ages about nutrition. One area of focus is malnutrition, a common concern among anyone over the age of 65.

Close to half of Albertans who come to hospital are malnourished—the clinical term for not getting enough nutritious food or not getting enough nutrition from the food they eat.

Many things can affect our appetite and how we eat. Learn more from our [Healthy Together story](#).

Helping Teens Adapt to the New Normal

Teenagers like to believe they can do anything, that they're like superheroes. But COVID-19 has clipped their powers, leaving them in an altered reality of physical distancing and staying at home.

For many teens and young adults, the pandemic is cramping their style and short-circuiting their social network. It's also adding to the typical anxiety and frustrations often experienced at this stage of life.

For parents, COVID-19 heightens the need for loving, honest and, at times, strategic talks with their older children.

“It’s normal for teens — and for parents as well — to feel anxious right now,” says Carla Kembel, a member of the Mental Health Promotion & Illness Prevention team at Alberta Health Services (AHS).

Read more about helping your teens at [Healthy Together](#), including simple, practical ideas to help teens connect safely with friends and family.

Shout Out

We received a note of thanks for our swabbing teams in Brooks, who have responded quickly and professionally to the immediate needs in that community. Praise was also sent our way for screening teams who are meeting people as they enter our sites, to ensure patients and AHS teams are kept safe. Thank you to our swabbers and screeners for being on our first line of defense against COVID-19.

We also want to acknowledge the nurse at the Royal Alexandra Hospital who took the time to make these cards to thank all of the hardworking staff on her unit, including environmental services, residents, managers and other nurses. Your thoughtfulness undoubtedly put smiles on the faces of your colleagues.

Physician Shout Out

We would like to give a shout out to our partners, who are working alongside us to fight this pandemic. Primary care clinics are ensuring patients with health concerns – COVID-19 or non-COVID-19 related – are not alone, even while isolating at home. Family doctors have responded to the pandemic with new, virtual approaches to keep Albertans cared for in their communities, which can free up needed spaces in our hospitals.

Showing Team Spirit

We know that so many of you are missing the NHL and the playoff season, which should be happening at this time of year, ideally with at least one Alberta team taking part! At the risk of unleashing an AHS battle of Alberta, we’re sharing these pictures of the Edmonton Zone’s jersey challenge today. Even the dogs caught the Oilers’ spirit as AHS teams took a moment to have some fun and briefly take their minds off the pandemic. Thanks for remembering to keep your physical distance in your reverie. We fully anticipate this will result in a similar display by AHS Flames’ fans.



Community Acts of Kindness - Car Group Uses Muscle to Connect

Members of Mustangs & Muscle Alberta have been taking it the streets, roads and highways to spread cheer and goodwill during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The auto club has 600 members across Alberta who love nothing better than taking their “muscle” cars out for a drive. On public roads, the convoy strictly follows the traffic laws, including travelling at or below the speed limit.

The weekend of April 25, 90 club members fired up their Mustangs, Camaros, Dodge Challengers and other high-performance street cars to parade past patients and families watching from windows at the Alberta Children’s Hospital in Calgary. Club members came from as far as Lethbridge, Camrose and Edmonton for the drive.

The hospital invited the club to repeat the drive by next spring.

More community drives are planned throughout the summer. Several continuing care centres in a variety of communities have asked Mustangs and Muscle Alberta to come by their sites to entertain residents. The club is looking at adding vintage cars to the drives.

Forsyth Lundy says the club also looks at their drives as a way of giving back to small communities. The convoys typically visit local drive-through restaurants to pick up 30 to 60 (prearranged) lunches.

It also shows the club’s biggest muscles are not under the hood in cars’ engines, but behind the wheel in members’ hearts.





The creative outpouring of support from Albertans is a daily reminder of how our community is working together to stop the spread of COVID-19. Each day we're astounded by how people continue to find new ways to carry us through the pandemic. The more Albertans do to show their support for the people of AHS, the more we are thankful for your passion, knowledge and determination.

Inspiration of the week

This very touching story is just what we need to inspire hope at the end of our eighth week in Alberta's fight against COVID-19. (Spoiler alert: you may need a tissue as you watch the video below.)

After spending five weeks at the Royal Alexandra Hospital overcoming COVID-19, pneumonia and treatment for a fractured pelvis, 80-year-old Colette Sevigny was discharged Thursday to the cheers of staff and physicians on unit 34.

Colette lost her husband of 58 years in January, and was determined to get well because she didn't want her children to lose her so soon after losing their father. Unable to visit her during much of her stay because of visiting restrictions, Colette's daughter, Louise Sevigny, had an emotional reunion with her mother as she was discharged. She's incredibly grateful for the care her mom received on unit 34, and thankful for the way staff ensured the family could connect with Colette during her stay and follow her rehab journey.



[Watch the video](#)

Harm Reduction Guidance & Opioid Poisoning Response:

Coping at Home for Families During COVID-19:

Communication for communities with COVID:

Guidance: Assessment/Alternate Care Centre Framework:

Thank you for your grit and determination as you keep Albertans safe. You continue to amaze us with the ways you connect and care for patients, and the support you provide behind the scenes to make this exceptional care possible. Our sincere thanks to those who are working this weekend. Please find ways to refresh and relax over the coming days, whether or not you are at work. Hang on to the hope we find in patients like Collette, who inspire us to keep doing all we can to stop COVID-19.

As the weather warms and Alberta takes its first steps in restarting the economy, we must stay vigilant, strong and measured. Our work goes on. What we do in the coming weeks will be as important as the works we've done in the past few months. And it will define us for years to come.

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