

COVID-19 Status

OCTOBER 13, 2020

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone. We are thankful for everything you've done over the past nine months since we became aware of the threat to Alberta posed by COVID-19. Today, we are asking for your continued help to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our facilities and in the province, as the average number of daily new cases continues to rise from week to week — and what we're seeing in the Edmonton Zone is particularly concerning.

Provincewide, the average number of daily new cases for the week ending on Oct. 7 rose 45 per cent compared to the previous week — from an average of 152 daily new cases to 220.

Edmonton Zone accounted for three of every five new cases in the province last week. During this period, the zone reported an average of 137 new daily cases, up from 82 the previous week, a 66 per cent increase. At more than 10 cases per 100,000, Edmonton Zone is experiencing the highest seven-day rolling average since the start of the pandemic. Alberta Health has imposed some voluntary restrictions on the [Edmonton Zone](#), but the situation isn't limited to Edmonton and we all have a role to play.

As healthcare professionals and leaders in your communities, you can continue to make a difference.

The best protection is to avoid crowding and maintain physical distancing whenever possible. At work, wearing a mask at all times can help keep everyone safe. This is a **requirement**, not an expectation, and applies to all zones, and all [AHS](#) or subsidiary facilities (clinical and corporate), in all settings where there may be contact with patients, families, visitors or the public, and in all other areas where physical distancing of two metres cannot be maintained.

In your communities this Thanksgiving weekend and beyond, please set an example and remind family, friends and neighbours about the importance of following public health guidelines. Minimize the number of people you socialize with from outside your household, and keep Thanksgiving celebrations as small as possible. Host your gathering outside if possible, and ensure tables are arranged to keep six feet between members of different households, paying particular attention to people at higher risk. Designate one person to serve all food, so people don't have to share serving utensils. When feeling sick, cancel the event if need be, stay home and use the [AHS online self-assessment tool](#) to guide your next steps.

Wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water, and avoid touching your face. Wear a mask when outside of your cohort and/or in public when physical distancing of two metres cannot be maintained.

Other notable COVID-19-related statistics:

- In the past seven days, individuals 20 to 49 years of age accounted for half of all new cases in the province.
- Currently, 77 people are in hospital with the virus and 13 of them are in an intensive care unit.
- Fourteen Albertans passed away between Oct. 1 and Oct. 7. We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones during this

time. In total, since the start of the pandemic in this province, 283 Albertans have died from COVID-19.

- As of Oct. 7, a total of 1,472,658 tests have been conducted. In the past week, 107,075 tests were completed for an average of 15,296 per day. The daily positivity rate on Oct.7 was 2.13 per cent. This is the first time since mid-May the daily positivity rate was above two per cent.
- As of Oct. 8, **AHS** has confirmed that 387 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious. Currently, 230 out of 2,415 schools in the province have reported that an infectious individual has attended their school.

We can all work together to stop the spread this Thanksgiving holiday: Protect your loved ones by practising [physical distancing](#). We all have a role to play!

Things You Need to Know

COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers

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 Oct 7:

- 54,969 employees (**AHS**, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 625 (or 1.14 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 625 employees who have tested positive, 83 (or 13.3 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with 186 of the 625 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).
- 3,571 physicians (**AHS**, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 42 (or 1.18 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 42 physicians who have tested positive, three (or 7.1 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with five of the 42 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](#).

Updated Designated Family/Support & Visitor Screening Tool for Acute Care Sites

Effective Tuesday, Oct. 13, Alberta Health Services (**AHS**) will implement an enhanced [designated family/support and visitor screening tool](#) in all acute care sites. This screening tool was updated to provide clarity and understanding for the screeners, designated family supports and visitors when they enter a site. It aligns with the [AHS](#) daily fit for work screening for all staff. You can find the updated screening tool [here](#).

This tool provides greater accuracy for those individuals who may not be symptomatic, yet are still in quarantine. It is intended to be done verbally. No personal information will be saved.

Updates include:

- Ensure individuals entering a site have not had any new or worsening symptoms that started in the last 10 days, including symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea in the last 48 hours.
- Further simplified and specified questions to ensure less grey area in answers when it comes to close contacts.
- Guidance regarding individuals testing positive in the past 10 days or awaiting results of test because of symptoms.
- Guidance regarding people who have had any instruction to self-isolate in the last 14 days.

Exemptions are included for designated family/support persons for pediatric patients, maternity or dependent adults based on the current guidelines, patient situation, site and care team.

Please contact patient.engagement@ahs.ca if you have any questions.

Verna's Weekly Video Message — Silver Linings and Gratitude

Over the past several weeks, we've been profiling the great work of our people across the province — both on the front lines and behind the scenes.

In this week's vlog, I (Verna) want to put the spotlight on some silver linings from our pandemic response. For instance, I'm incredibly grateful for all of you and the great things you've done. You are an amazing team that's focused on protecting and caring for Albertans and also being there for one another.

While our leadership team continues to look for ways to support you, I encourage you to keep supporting one another, whether that's through some encouraging words of gratitude, [sending an e-card](#) or even just listening. These things make a difference.

And now I [invite you to watch some of our colleagues share what they are grateful for, and some of their silver linings during COVID-19.](#)



Environmental Services Do Their Part to Keep Patients Safe

Work to clean and disinfect our facilities plays a key role in our pandemic response. We have all been doing our part to follow required cleaning processes to keep our sites safe, especially our Environmental Services teams.

During the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in patient room isolation cleaning, most notably in emergency departments. The number of patients who are screened and placed on isolation precautions has dramatically increased; in many cases, doubled or tripled. Isolation cleaning is a resource-intensive cleaning process that helps break the chain of infection and ensures a safe environment for our patients.

Environmental Services teams are also conducting enhanced cleaning, meaning they clean high-touch surfaces three times daily in long-term care and designated supportive living sites, emergency departments, urgent care centres and designated COVID-19 units. These teams have also been instrumental to clinical areas during times of disinfectant and alcohol-based hand rub supply disruptions by working with sites to support with substitute products and preservation measures.

Our Environmental Services teams have stepped up during the pandemic and we sincerely appreciate their efforts and willingness to adjust their work routines in order to meet evolving patient care needs.

Global Handwashing Day and National Infection Control Week Later This Month

Oct. 15 is [Global Handwashing Day](#), a global advocacy day dedicated to increasing awareness and understanding about the importance of handwashing with soap and water as an effective and affordable way to prevent disease and save lives. Global Handwashing Day is an opportunity to

design, test and replicate creative ways to encourage people to clean their hands using soap and water (or alcohol-based hand rub).

Oct. 19 – 23 is [National Infection Control Week](#), a time for infection control professionals to educate staff and the community about the importance of infection prevention and to promote the important work of infection control professionals. Although the COVID-19 pandemic will be a theme this year, the goal of this week is to ‘get back to basics’ and remind [AHS](#) staff, physicians and volunteers of the vital importance of infection prevention and control (IPC) practices during and beyond COVID-19.

IPC created an interactive, virtual escape room game in which you can apply your infection prevention and control knowledge. You can play on your desktop computer [here](#) starting Oct. 15. If you have questions or comments, email: hand.hygiene@ahs.ca.

New Federal Sick Leave, Caregiver Benefits

This week, the Government of Canada announced changes to financial aid, including a new sick leave benefit and a new caregiver benefit for those forced to take time off work to care for a dependent because of the pandemic. Financial aid may be available for those who are unable to come to work due to isolation requirements who do not have access to paid leave or other income support. Staff can learn more about the benefits and supports available [here](#).

Supporting Alberta Schools and Parents

[AHS](#) is working closely with provincial partners to support a safe and healthy return to school. After engaging with superintendents across Alberta, [AHS](#) learned parents are looking for guidance on what to do about sending their child to school or daycare during the pandemic. As a result, we’ve released Guidance for Parents of Children Attending School and/or Childcare. The new resource provides specific information about what to do if a child feels unwell and/or has been notified by [AHS](#) as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19. We encourage you to share this resource and learn more at ahs.ca/parentcovidguide.

As of Oct. 7, [AHS](#) started notifying parents of close contacts in schools by email rather than by phone. We believe this will streamline our notification process, better support school administrators, and notify parents and guardians faster. This will also support our contract tracing and public health staff as they continue to connect with Albertans who may have been exposed to COVID-19. Many thanks to the Health Link and Public Health Contact Tracing teams for the many thousands of calls they made to parents before the process changed.

Visit alberta.ca/returntoschool for more information and guidance on re-entry for the 2020/21 school year.

Be Well - Be Kind

Togetherall, Text4Hope Can Promote, Protect Your Mental Wellness

Togetherall

We know COVID-19 has an impact on mental health. In an effort to enhance mental health supports for Albertans, [AHS](#) is partnering with Togetherall — a free, online network that offers anonymous, peer-to-peer mental health services 24 hours a day, seven days a

week. Through the network, you can share, connect and support others in a safe online community. You can sign up for Togetherall at ahs.ca/virtualmentalhealth. This network will help connect you with others during a time when we are physically disconnected. It is so important to maintain our social connections and this platform will provide a way for us to connect with others from all walks of life.

Text4Hope

With the help of several foundation partners, the Text4Hope service was launched in the spring, sending subscribers text messages of support in the hope of easing stress and anxiety. Over the past several months, we have been hearing how this program has helped Albertans. Today, we are pleased to share one of those [stories from Jaime Gonek](#), a lab technologist, runner and mom of four.



Text4Hope is making a difference for Albertans, and we thank our partners—the Mental Health Foundation, Calgary Health Trust, University Hospital Foundation, Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation, Alberta Cancer Foundation and Alberta Children’s Hospital Foundation—for their support of this program.

Text COVID19HOPE to393939 to subscribe or visit ahs.ca/text4hope if you would like more information.

Former South Zone Medical Director Recognized for Mentoring

We’d like to congratulate longtime Lethbridge physician Dr. Vanessa Maclean - a former medical director in the South Zone of Alberta Health Services - for receiving the May Cohen Award for Women

Mentors. The award is presented to a female physician and Canadian Medical Association member who has demonstrated outstanding mentoring.

Starting as a family physician in Lethbridge in 1987, she later became an emergency department doctor, then medical director for the zone. Dr. Maclean retired from that position in 2016 but remains active in the medical community.

As medical director, she kept an eye out for promising young physicians with big ideas, making sure they had a chance to be heard, and made herself available when they needed advice or support. In 2017, she conducted a review of the experience of female physician leaders in Alberta; it found women are under-represented in leadership positions in healthcare and encounter barriers to achieving those positions.

Today, Dr. Maclean's work focuses primarily on the establishment of Connect Care, and she is still actively mentoring women and other emerging leaders.

Celebrity Shout-out – Heartland Actress Michelle Morgan

Musicians, artists and athletes all over Canada keep sending messages of gratitude to our staff, teams and volunteers.

Today's shout-out comes from [Michelle Morgan, star of CBC's *Heartland*](#).

"I just wanted to take a minute and say thank you to all the doctors. You guys rock," says the Calgary-born actress and filmmaker, who is now based in Vancouver.

"Alberta Health Services, you guys are the best... You guys are who help us sleep at night because should we or our families become sick, you guys have our backs."

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



Sharing the Love

Thank you, healthcare aides

We would like to thank all of our healthcare aides (HCAs) for their dedication in providing outstanding care to patients every day. Our approximately 7,400 HCAs are one of the largest workforces in **AHS** and are vital members of the healthcare team. Your work and perseverance during this pandemic has been nothing short of amazing and you continue to go above and beyond. And thank you for your dedication.

- Sherry Silver, Health Professions Strategy & Practice

Note: Oct. 18 is Healthcare Aide Day, a time to celebrate the continued dedication of healthcare aides for providing outstanding care to patients every day. [Learn more](#) about how you can celebrate.

Gratitude from Albertans

To all the nursing staff in Unit 54 of Foothills Medical Centre,
My deep gratitude goes to the day and night nurses, including the discharge nurse, who looked after me for a complex knee surgery. They showed true professionalism and genuine care, and made my stay a very pleasant one. Many thanks!

- C. Max Wang

Thank you to all the doctors, nurses and support staff for all your hard work. Greatly appreciated.

- Pamela Holmerson

Thank you for showing such patience and kindness with each patient and student you interact with. It has been a pleasure to watch and learn from you through your connections with patients, as well as how you teach fellow students. Your kindness is greatly appreciated!

- Anonymous

Wrapping up — The Power of Being Grateful

Author and researcher Brene Brown has a quote that resonates with both of us: “There is no joy without gratitude.” And for all of us in healthcare - whether we work on the front lines or behind the scenes - let us take a moment over the next few days to remember how lucky we are to do work that directly or indirectly makes a positive difference in the lives of others. Of course, our work can be difficult and draining, emotionally and physically, and the pandemic has only made what we do more complex and stressful. Let us take time to remember healthcare provides us all an opportunity to help in a time of need; to assist in a time of transition; to provide guidance in a time of tumult. There was clearly a desire in each and every one of you that led you to work in healthcare. A desire to help others. To do work that’s meaningful.



Laura and I will celebrate all of you, give thanks for all you do, and be grateful that your desire to do important work has led you to Alberta Health Services. Thank you for all you do, each and every day. We wish you a happy Thanksgiving, and hope you find time over the next few days to rest and be joyful.

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 Health Hub*

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