

# COVID-19 Status

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## **APRIL 20, 2020**

A total of 241 new cases have been reported, bringing the total number of cases to 2,803.

Four Albertans died in the 24 hours since our last report. Once more, and with heavy hearts, we offer our sympathy to the family and friends of these people. As well, we share in the sadness and loss felt by the caregivers who did their best to help these people.

We are encouraged to report Alberta now has 1,198 confirmed recovered cases of COVID-19.

## Things You Need to Know

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### **Reaching a Lab Milestone: 100,000 Tests Completed**

Late Saturday night, Alberta Precision Laboratories marked a significant milestone in our COVID-19 response: completing 100,000 tests. As of today, 97,180 people have been tested and we have performed 101,323 tests, 4,426 of them in the past 24 hours.

We were able to do this thanks to the combined efforts of teams throughout AHS and APL, such as our assessment centres, public health nurses and Emergency Medical Services. And many of them collected swabs while working outside in the wind, snow and cold.

This is a truly remarkable achievement, and one everyone at AHS and APL can take pride in.

Six weeks ago, we were testing dozens of COVID-19 samples a day. Now, our public health laboratories are testing thousands of samples every day. The level of diligence, expertise and teamwork required to escalate our testing capacity is once again proof Alberta boasts some of the most talented healthcare professionals in the country.

Every test completed is a step towards solving the complexity of COVID-19. Every sample we collect, and every positive case we detect helps to better understand the virus, prevent its spread and keep Albertans healthy and safe.

Saturday's outstanding milestone paves the way for increasing testing capacity in the weeks ahead throughout the province.

Today, we offer our thanks and recognition to the staff in our public health laboratories and the entire APL team.

### **Frontline focus for PPE**

AHS is creating a front-line focus group to review and advise on new personal protective equipment (PPE) purchases and help address appropriate use.

AHS has several new providers of PPE, and staff have raised some concerns regarding some recently distributed equipment. We thank you for voicing your concerns. Your feedback is valuable. We are taking this matter seriously to ensure our workforce has safe, reliable and comfortable PPE.

We will continue to support our workforce as you work to support and care for all of us.

Some new PPE supplies differ from what our frontline care providers are used to. Unfortunately our original vendors could not meet the demand for products. We acknowledge this is causing problems and we will work with staff to improve the products and be assured of continued supply of appropriate PPE from multiple sources in the future.

As well, we are addressing specific concerns about odour from two new mask models. The smell is the result of being sealed immediately after production to prevent contamination. This weekend, warehouse staff unpacked the masks to allow the masks' odour to dissipate before they are sent to sites.

### **Urgent & Emergency Care During COVID-19**

In the [newest COVID-19 podcast](#), Dr. Sid Viner, the medical director for Calgary Zone, talks about using urgent and emergency care. Highlights of the six-minute interview include:

- Alberta's urgent care centres and emergency department are safe
- Albertans are encouraged to seek urgent and emergency care as needed, including calling 911
- Typical emergencies include chest pain, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, severe stomach pain, numbness and tingling (which could suggest a stroke) or serious injury
- We urge Albertans to not let COVID-19 keep them from the care they need
- Albertans unsure of the care they need can call Health Link at 811 for advice
- Precautions are in place in urgent care centres and emergency departments to prevent the spread of COVID-19; staff are screening patients and healthcare workers; all are practicing hand hygiene
- Anyone with COVID-19 and in need of emergency care, can call 911 or come to the hospital for help
- We are living in a very different time right now, but we are still here to provide urgent care and emergency care.

### **Protective Services Rises to the Challenge**

The importance of our Protective Services (PS) personnel cannot be overstated, especially during visitor and entry restrictions at our healthcare facilities made necessary by COVID-19.

Demand for PS has spiked in South Zone as the pandemic emerged. PS staff have continually risen to the challenge, often going above and beyond to protect other AHS staff and our patients.

In one example, PS staff, led by Derrick Romano at the Chinook Regional Hospital, partnered with AHS Print Services to create a new indoor screening pathway for entering the facility. This allowed people to escape the elements while maintaining social distancing. Previously, they lined up outside, which on cold days complicated and delayed temperature checks. The result is staff get to their positions and patients faster.

Rural sites are also supported around-the-clock by three mobile peace officers, who remain on the road so they can respond to security needs as quickly as possible.

### **Emergency Departments are here for Patients when They Need Us**

In these extraordinary times, AHS has had to make significant changes to the way we deliver healthcare.

But, one thing has remained the same – if anyone needs urgent, emergency healthcare, they will receive it. We do not want anyone to stay away from an emergency department if they need help. We are always here to provide care when we're needed.

We want to remind Albertans that if they think they have a serious or life-threatening injury or illness, they should always go straight to an emergency department or call 911 immediately. If someone has any COVID-19 symptoms - and is having a medical emergency – they should call 911. If they need to go to an emergency department, 911 will alert the facility so that a mask can be provided upon arrival. Triage should be made aware of symptoms. With COVID-19, the following symptoms are considered to be medical emergencies:

- severe difficulty breathing (e.g., struggling for each breath, speaking in single words)
- severe chest pain
- having a very hard time waking up
- feeling confused
- lost consciousness

Our hospitals and emergency departments remain a safe place to come and to receive care.

### **PPE Tips**

This new daily series - *PPE Tip of the Day* – features quick and simple reminders you can take forward into your practice, from shift to shift.

#### **Cleaning your hands:**

Cleaning your hands is the most critical step in protecting yourself from COVID-19. Wash your hands with either alcohol hand sanitizer, or soap and water for 30 seconds. Please watch this [video](#) to find out more about proper handwashing technique.

#### ***Removing your surgical mask:***

When removing your surgical mask (if soiled, or if removing to eat), always remember to [remove the mask](#) by the straps/ties. Do not touch the mask itself. Dispose of the mask and immediately wash your hands.

Work is continuing on the temporary Sprung Pandemic Response facility located at the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary. The main structure is 90 per cent complete, the floors are installed and the beds have now been delivered. Equipment is expected to arrive next week. The 8,250-square-foot project is on budget and on time, with a target completion date of April 26.

Thanks goes to Sprung Structures, Falkbuilt Technologies, CANA Construction, Botting Mechanical, Acutech Electric and Stantec for their hard work creating the building. Thanks also to Alberta Government, Alberta Health, The City of Calgary and teams from throughout Alberta Health Services who have worked to ensure the project will be completed in record time.

See the progress underway on the construction of this temporary structure, which will add 70 patient care spaces to Calgary Zone capacity.





### **Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update – Calgary Zone**

On March 16 when the Adult Day Program (ADP) for residents of Didsbury, Strathmore and Airdrie had to close due to COVID-19, Recreation Therapist Brandee Elliott had an idea to help her team stay connected to day program participants. The ADP provides respite care and socialization to clients and with the closure, she said “I quickly realized that we needed to provide more for our clients during this time, particularly those who are isolated with limited family support.”

To meet that need, she and her team of six therapy assistants rolled out “Go the Distance” on March 20, through which the Rural NE Integrated Home Care team is able to connect with all pre-existing day program clients, once or twice a week, by telephone. The phone calls soon moved to Zoom calls, 20 to 30 minutes in length, which have now progressed to group Zoom calls, to keep clients connected

virtually. Designed to provide cognitive stimulation, the therapists connect through trivia questions, games such as “name that tune”, and for some dementia patients, a visual reminisce program.

“Go the Distance” has been received positively by both staff and clients. Client Gordon Waterston prefers activities on a Zoom call, saying “This is a lot better than on the phone,” and his daughter Carol notes “I think it works really, really well. It gives him a chance to see someone else other than me.”

As for staff, Elliott notes: “It not only provides our clients with a chance to connect with us and others, and improve their mood, but is also providing meaningful, positive work for my team.”

This pilot program has been so successful that Elliott is now providing training to other zones to “Go the Distance”, and she is already considering how it can be used as a communication tool, post-pandemic.



Adult Day Program Client Gordon Waterston and his daughter Carol meet with Recreation Therapist, Brandee Elliott

#### **AHS Operating North Zone Continuing Care Facility**

AHS has now taken over day-to-day operations of the Manoir du Lac continuing care facility in McLennan. To date, 26 residents at the local continuing care facility have tested positive for COVID-19, and there have been five COVID-related resident deaths. There are also 11 staff who have tested positive for COVID-19. Manoir du Lac has 62 residents and employs 70 staff.

AHS will act immediately to improve outbreak control, as well as infection prevention and control measures, to address the site's COVID-19 outbreak. Effective immediately, residents at Manoir du Lac will undergo daily screenings, including a temperature check and symptom monitoring. Residents displaying new respiratory symptoms will be isolated in their room and staff caring for them will be wearing all recommended personal protective equipment. These measures are standard practice at all AHS continuing care facilities in Alberta. See [news release](#) for more information.

### **Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update – Central Zone**

The Rural Clinical Nurse Education team has been busy providing E-Simulation and COVID-19 Walkthrough Sessions for staff. The team of nine educators, with assistance from our seniors' health and addictions and mental health educators, has provided over 50 sessions to date, at 22 sites across the Zone. The sessions include PPE donning and doffing with the utilization of doffing buddies, intubation, movement of patients within facilities, transfers, and code blue management.

"The collaboration between operations, nursing staff and local physicians is like nothing I've seen before," says Dr. Jaco Hoffman, Associate Zone Medical Director, and Facility Medical Director, Olds. "Through that collaboration I feel very confident that we have the ability to care for acute COVID-19 cases, as well as the other patient care needs we experience here. The simulations were extremely helpful in providing an opportunity to practice and prepare."

In addition to the magnitude of work above, the seniors' health team has been providing PPE donning and doffing sessions to continuing care staff. To date, they have had 451 nurses and health care aids attend these sessions.

All across the zone, people are being creative and continuing to stay connected during this pandemic. The family of a gentleman in the Wainwright Hospital and Care Centre found a safe, physically distant way to connect with him, to make sure he knows he's loved and valued, even though they can't visit in person. He was able to see his family and their encouraging message through the window, and talk to them over the phone during the visit.



### **Protecting Privacy during COVID-19**

During this state of emergency, our obligations to our patients have not changed. The Health Information Act ([HIA](#)), the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ([FOIP](#)), AHS' [privacy policy](#) and best practices still apply. Under no circumstances will staff or physicians access or disclose health records of individuals for whom they are not providing healthcare.

### **New PPE Continues to Protect our People**

AHS continues to ensure personal protective equipment (PPE) is available and supplied to healthcare workers across Alberta. Procedure masks have recently been deployed across many sites in Alberta to enable continuous masking in all patient care settings. As the regular supply chain for procurement of procedure masks cannot meet the required demand during this response, staff may see 10 or more new brands of masks over the coming weeks. These masks are all safe, certified, and meet ATSM Level 1 filtration requirements.

### **Physicians Talk PPE – New Video Series**

In the latest installment of [Physicians Talk PPE](#), Dr. Stephanie Smith of University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton says she feels safe coming to work and believes her colleagues should, too, providing they follow guidelines for the donning and doffing of personal protective equipment (PPE). "I definitely feel that AHS cares about my safety," says Dr. Smith.





### **Multi-Site Guidance for Midwives**

Many registered midwives are required to provide primary care across multiple sites (including hospitals and community settings, including midwifery community practice and client homes) in the course of their day. For these reasons, registered midwives are not currently required to restrict their activities to a single site. No registered midwife should be providing care to patients/ clients if they have any new symptoms that may be consistent with an infectious disease. All registered midwives working at multiple sites are asked to observe a number of [measures](#).

### **Protective Services Launching New Safety Ambassadors Program**

Starting next week, Protective Services is launching the Safety Ambassadors program in response to increased requests for support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Safety Ambassadors will be responsible for screening, greeting and educating visitors on current AHS visitation policies, helping with wayfinding, and sharing information on any COVID-19 related expectations or policies. Although part of Protective Services, Safety Ambassadors are not peace officers or security guards, and will not have the authority to engage directly in security-related activities.

Safety Ambassadors will be deployed to select acute and urgent care sites in Calgary Zone and Edmonton Zone to start, with the potential to expand provincially.

All requests for Protective Services support, either for a Safety Ambassador, or for emergency or enforcement needs, should still be made through each site's Protective Services office.

### **National Volunteer Week – April 19-25, 2020**

Today marks the start of National Volunteer Week and on behalf of our organization, we thank all our volunteers for their generous contributions over the past year. In 2019, over 14,000 volunteers gave more than 1.2 million hours of their time.

While COVID-19 has affected our volunteer programs, the importance of their contributions to our health system is unchanged. We want to ensure volunteers they are in our thoughts and we are so grateful they freely give their time and talents to support healthcare in Alberta.

### **Healthy Together**

Our [Healthy Together](#) health and wellness information is filled with advice and tips about caring for yourself and your family during COVID-19. You'll find friendly, upbeat ideas and tips about topics such as getting outside, the benefits of family dinners and the power of giving thanks.

These stories can remind us all of the need to unwind from stress and connect to those important in our lives. We encourage you to check out these recent features:

#### **Giving and Getting Thanks Make Us Feel Better**

These are times like none other. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the many ways COVID-19 has changed our lives. At the same time, we can turn uncertainty into resiliency. By being grateful, we can transform negative thoughts into positive intentions.

Gratitude feels good, both to give and to receive. Showing thanks can be one of the most effective ways to contribute and make a difference. [Read more.](#)

#### **Parents Take Care of Yourselves**

Self-care. It's a recommended mantra—and practice—for parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taking care of yourself helps in two ways. One—it gives you the energy to care for your family. Two—it preserves and protects your mental and physical health.

“How you care for yourself varies from person to person,” says Keri-Lynn Strain, the manager of Healthy Parents, Healthy Children at Alberta Health Services. “You could ask a dozen people how they care for themselves and get a dozen different answers. What's common is making and taking time for yourself and for your wellbeing.” [Read more.](#)

#### **Stay 'n' Play!**

Whatever your age, play can make your day. For your children, play is essential. Especially in this time of physical distancing and staying at home.

Children need lots of playtime. “From ages one to four, children need at least three hours of activity over the course of the day,” says Laura Crawford, a program facilitator with Healthy Children and

Families at Alberta Health Services. “Children five and older need at least one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.” [Read more.](#)

### **United We Stand**

I was telling my roommate about how in the AHS update yesterday, Albertans were encouraged to place a heart in our front window in support of AHS frontline workers. I asked him to make me a heart vinyl sticker. He surprised me with this instead!

Kristina Sveinson  
Team Lead, Connect Care Learning Support, Red Deer



### **Hats Off to Health Link**

I just wanted to share the awe and inspiration I felt (in March) at Health Link Edmonton as I did my first redeployment supporting the COVID-19 call centre. Manager Deb, supervisor Beth and the teams working the phone lines were incredible. The whole atmosphere of Health Link was one of calm, friendliness, inviting (as a team member) and positive. This made my first day there feel very welcoming. I left with a better appreciation for the whole Health Link team of nurses and support staff in the role they play in making sure the public feels safe, secure and reassured in this time of uncertainty and anxiety. I was left with hope, pride and a sense of belonging as part of the broader AHS family. Hats off to all at Health Link.

Marty Landrie

### **Medal-worthy performance**

I've spent some time at the community assessment centres supporting teams and seen firsthand how amazing the nurses have been. Without these testing centres and the nurses collecting the NP swabs for COVID-19 testing, we would not be where we are with (100,000) Albertans tested. Early identification/testing is key to controlling outbreaks. I've been so impressed with how many have stepped up to help out despite the fear even amongst healthcare professionals. They have acted with professionalism and compassion under very stressful conditions for the individuals and families that have been coming. These nurses deserve a medal! It's been an honour to work with them. Please say thank you to them from one Albertan and Canadian. They have made Canada proud.

Kristine Cannon  
Infection Prevention and Control  
Peter Lougheed Centre (Calgary)

### **Our Salute to You**

As Alberta enters its seventh week of stopping the spread of COVID-19, we want to salute your unwavering commitment to the people of our province. The speed, agility and creativity individuals and teams have demonstrated continue to amaze and inspire us. We are in awe of what we've been able to do, together.

As an organization and a community, we are being tested in ways we could have never imagined. And we have excelled, as we so often do, in the most demanding of circumstances. We are immensely moved and proud of your kindness, professionalism and courage.

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](mailto:ahs.ecc.operations.ih@ahs.ca) \*\*\***

**\*\*\*For Indigenous Services Canada please**

**email [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca) \*\*\***

*Josipa Pavicic on behalf of Nadine McRee*