

## COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone: PCN updates

Dear primary care colleagues,

On behalf of the [PCN Incident Response Task Group](#), we would like to share some important information related to COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone.

The Task Group was formed to ensure a coordinated provincial response to the virus. It plays a key role in integrating Primary Care Networks into provincial emergency management efforts. Although you are already receiving critical updates from a several other sources, we will be gathering and sharing information specific to PCN physicians via this weekly newsletter. We hope this is helpful.

Below, we have highlighted some key developments that we would like to bring to your attention. On behalf of the Calgary Zone PCNs, we'd like to thank you for your patience, your professionalism and your commitment to delivering excellent patient care in these unprecedented and challenging circumstances.



*Dr. Michael Spady*  
Medical Leader, Community Health Services  
Calgary Zone



*Dr. Ernst Greyvenstein*  
PCN Physician Lead,  
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### Your 'source of truth' for the latest COVID-19 information

Physicians and primary care providers can find the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 at [ahs.ca/covidphc](https://ahs.ca/covidphc). Please click on 'COVID-19 FAQs for Primary Care Providers' for regularly updated bulletins about assessment centres, practice protocol, physician supports and more. Patients can be directed to [ahs.ca/covid](https://ahs.ca/covid).

### Personal Protective Equipment delivery

Personal Protective Equipment for primary care has been delivered to each Zone and will be accessible through PCNs. About 70,000 masks are being distributed province-wide. In the Calgary area, PCNs were expecting to receive shipments of masks and a limited number of related supplies, including gowns and gloves, as early as today. Your PCN will be in touch to confirm local plans for distribution. Primary care physicians can see patients exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms if they have the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment and swabs. More information -- including patient flow maps and instructions on testing, using of equipment and isolation -- is available via [ahs.ca/covidphc](https://ahs.ca/covidphc). AHS also has a '[Donning and Doffing' video](#) that may be useful to watch as a refresher. It's worth noting that N95 respirators are not required; nasopharyngeal swabs for COVID-19 testing are not an aerosol-generating procedure.

### Testing criteria

Beginning March 12, all respiratory virus samples submitted from community patients will be tested only for COVID-19. If influenza testing is required, contact the virologist on call. Do not test anyone for COVID-19 if they do not have ILI symptoms. Effective immediately, people with fever and/or a cough or

shortness of breath should be considered for COVID-19 testing, if, within 14 days before symptoms began, they meet any of the following criteria:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-ncov-case-def.pdf>. Please note: Medical Officer of Health bulletins, which include testing criteria, are updated regularly. Please visit [ahs.ca/covidphc](https://ahs.ca/covidphc) to ensure you are referencing the latest version.

### **Assessment Centre, Zone Emergency Operations Centres**

Calgary's COVID assessment centre opened last week and it is accepting referrals through the Health Link 811 triaging process. Call volumes are fluctuating but can be extremely high. If the caller hears a message that all lines are busy, AHS is encouraging them to try again immediately (call back). Additional staff are being trained. This model is evolving daily with respect to potential expansions of service in both urban and rural areas. However, at the time of writing the Calgary assessment centre is receiving referrals through Health Link 811 for both urban and rural patients. Turnaround times for tests are currently approximately 24 to 36 hours. Positive tests are followed up by the Medical Officer of Health. Negative swabs are followed up by Assessment Centre staff.

### **Made in Alberta recommendations**

Against a backdrop of extensive media coverage and social media commentary, providers and patients alike are receiving what may seem like inconsistent messages about the COVID response strategy. It's worth noting that Alberta's strategy – including the protocols and processes adopted – may differ from other provinces. Each province has a chief Medical Officer of Health who makes decisions based on a provincial context. Our MOHs in Alberta are adhering to World Health Organization recommendations related to personal protective requirements, among other issues. Other provinces may be approaching this in a different way. For the latest information on Alberta's approach please consult [ahs.ca/covidphc](https://ahs.ca/covidphc).

### **Monday's COVID-19 event online only**

An education event being held in Calgary next week related to COVID-19 and updates for family physicians is now online only. To participate in the livestream, which takes place on the evening of Monday, March 16, please register here: <http://rtms.eventbrite.ca> (the event includes information about rTMS treatment as well as COVID-19 content).

### **COVID-19 March Update**

The Cumming School of Medicine is hosting a COVID-19 webinar on Wednesday, March 18, from 7-9 p.m. Click here for more information: [https://events.ucalgary.ca/#!view/event/event\\_id/25824](https://events.ucalgary.ca/#!view/event/event_id/25824)

### **Billing code**

As per Thursday's announcement, the [03.01AD billing code](#) used during the H1N1 response has been activated for COVID-19 calls.

### **Medical Officer of Health, key contacts**

To contact on-call Medical Officers of Health in the Calgary Zone, call 403.264.5615 or email [MOH.Calgary@ahs.ca](mailto:MOH.Calgary@ahs.ca)

### **Primary care concerns: We're here to help**

If you have questions or concerns that have not been answered in this communication or via the [ahs.ca/covidphc](https://ahs.ca/covidphc) website, please forward them to [jake.jennings@calgaryareapcns.ca](mailto:jake.jennings@calgaryareapcns.ca).