

## COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone: PCN update #2 – March 19, 2020

Dear colleagues,

The past few weeks have presented all of us with challenges and circumstances that have, in many ways, demonstrated the importance of primary care within the health care system and the strong bond we have with our patients. As members of the [PCN Incident Response Task Group](#), we have been humbled by the dedication, care and commitment shown by family physicians, health care professionals and those working to support us as we care for our patients. We have also seen the strain and the stress many of our colleagues are under as they grapple with difficult decisions related to their clinics and the burden of caring for extremely distressed patients and staff.

Let's all try to look out for each other and remind our colleagues of the support available through services such as the Alberta Medical Association's [Physician and Family Support Program](#), which offers confidential help 24/7 at 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637). Physicians experiencing COVID-19 symptoms can call the physician-only line at 587-284-5302 if isolation/swabbing is required.

We recognize that more needs to be done to ensure you have the support you need to manage patients safely and effectively in the medical home. Discussions are taking place at many levels – including with labs and pharmacies – and we will share updates as soon as they are available. In the meantime, let's do what we can to support each other to care for our patients – whether that's in our clinics or by reinforcing the importance of social distancing and avoiding unnecessary emergency/urgent care visits. We're truly all in this together.



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



*Dr. Ernst Greyvenstein*  
PCN Physician Lead,  
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### COVID-19 education event: Thank you!

Thank you to the more than 600 family physicians who took part in a live streaming education event on Monday evening. The YouTube video has already been watched more than 1,000 times. Special thanks to our panel: Dr. Lisa Harpur (rTMS), Dr. John Gill, Dr. Christine Luelo and Dr. Jia Hu, as well as our host and event organizer, Dr. Rick Ward.

- [Video: COVID-19 event & Q&A](#) | [Slides: Dr. John Gill](#)
- [Your questions answered: Physician Q&A from COVID-19 education event](#)
- [Video: rTMS](#) | [Slides: Dr. Lisa Harpur](#)

Please note: As referenced in the livestream, there have been reports that non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors (ACEi) and angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARB) can increase the risk of a more severe infection in those exposed. As with all situations involving emerging evidence, family physicians will need to have these discussions with their

patients. We are not recommending widespread discontinuation of ACEi and ARBs. We suggest patients favour acetaminophen over ibuprofen for management of symptoms ([click here for CBC/WHO report](#)).

### **Protective equipment**

Your PCN has been working hard to ensure family physicians have access to personal protective equipment. Please click on the FAQ via [ahs.ca/covidphc](https://ahs.ca/covidphc) for the latest on personal protective equipment (PPE), or contact your local PCN regarding available supplies and reordering. Please screen patients as you book them and as they arrive so that you are using your PPE when necessary. Physicians don't always need to be in PPE. Consider moving your upper respiratory infection patients to later in day when you can minimize exposure. Travel is currently still the strongest indicator of disease risk. [Virtual care](#) is another option being considered by many clinics.

### **In-clinic testing**

Now that family physicians can send swabs for COVID-19 testing without consulting with a Medical Officer of Health, the ordering practitioner will receive results as per your usual protocol. There is no need to inform the MoH; public health is working with labs to monitor results. Symptomatic patients should self-isolate at home while waiting for results. If the swab is negative, they should remain in self-isolation until afebrile. *Asymptomatic patients should not be swabbed* (unless directed by the MoH). Specimen collection processes are [outlined here](#) (but check the FAQ for the latest information). It's important to note that NP swabs are in short supply. If your clinic does not want to perform swabs please reach out to your PCN to ask if they are needed by another clinic. A reminder that positive swabs are followed up by the Medical Officer of Health; Health Link contacts patients with negative results.

### **Assessment (testing) centres, 811**

The protocol for directing patients for testing remains the same: via the [online assessment tool](#) and Health Link 811. Two more drive through assessment (testing) centres are opening this week in the south and north, and the Rural Department is in the process of opening sites to support rural patients. Please note that the 811 is NOT directing patients to family physicians for testing.

### **Scheduled and elective surgeries cancelled**

Patients are in the process of being contacted by AHS following the announcement that all scheduled and elective surgeries are being postponed. Patients anxious to hear about their surgery are asked not to call Health Link 811 or their clinic; they will be contacted as soon as possible. Urgent and emergency surgery, as well as oncology and scheduled caesarean procedures, will continue.

### **Travel advisories**

Resources: [Public Health Agency of Canada advisories](#) | [World Health Organization bulletins](#)

### **Your 'source of truth'**

Physicians and primary care providers can find the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 at [ahs.ca/covidphc](https://ahs.ca/covidphc). The FAQ is updated daily based on questions and feedback from physicians and providers. Patients can be directed to [ahs.ca/covid](https://ahs.ca/covid). We're also starting to collect Calgary Zone-specific resources via Specialist LINK at <https://www.specialistlink.ca/covid19/covid19-resources.cfm>.

### **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).