

## COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone: PCN update #3 – March 26, 2020

Dear colleagues,

In the nine days since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, we have all faced significant challenges to the way in which we practice, run clinics and treat patients. All specialties and services, including both leadership and administrative staff, have been focused solely on the COVID-19 response. With that focus it can be challenging to effectively convey the amount of work being done – not to mention the successes. Often, we only see the continued frustrations and seeming lack of cohesion when, in fact, this is the ‘storming’ part of the response that is always necessary in a crisis.

Our focus continues to be on maintaining the vital role and influence primary care has and ensuring we can be partners in the response. It is going to require all of us working together. We are exceptionally fortunate to have structures and relationships already in place within the Calgary Zone. In the coming weeks you will see all partners shifting to the next phase of the response. The first COVID-19 patients are being admitted to hospitals and we know more are coming. We will be called upon to continue to support our patients, as we always have. We will need to work closely with acute care to ensure our patients can access hospital care when they need it.

We would like to reassure you that our advocacy and influence in our respective organizations will continue, with the goal of supporting you to provide quality continuity of care to your patients during this pandemic. Please accept our sincere gratitude for all that you are doing to care for your patients in this extremely challenging environment.



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Medical Leader, Community Health Services  
Calgary Zone



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### COVID-19 education event: March 30

Physicians are invited to register for a second COVID-19 education event which is scheduled for Monday, March 30. To register, go to <https://calgaryzonecovid-19update.eventbrite.ca>. This live-streamed event, which will take place from 6-8 p.m., features Dr. Margie Oakander (mental health during a pandemic), Dr. John Gill (Infectious Disease), Dr. Jia Hu (Public Health), Dr. Christine Luelo (PCN) and a Q&A. Questions can be sent in advance to [info@calgaryareapcns.ca](mailto:info@calgaryareapcns.ca) or via YouTube during the event. Content from the March 16 event is also available here: [Video: COVID-19 event](#) | [Your questions: Physician Q&A](#)

### Virtual care codes

Virtual care code categories were added earlier this week, retroactive to March 17. [Full bulletin.](#)

- Visit services: 03.03CV (continue to use 03.01AD for calls under 10 minutes)
- Consultation services: 03.08.CV | Mental health services: 09.19CW

Please note: A College of Family Physicians of Canada webinar is planned for Thursday, March 26, at 10 a.m. MT. [Details here](#). The Alberta Medical Association is hosting virtual care webinars on Friday, March 27, from 12-1:15 p.m. and 5-6:15 p.m. Registration details are due to be released shortly.

### Protective equipment

PCNs are working hard to ensure family physicians can reorder personal protective equipment for clinics. Please contact your home PCN for order deadlines and other information. Please screen patients as you book them and as they arrive so that you are using your PPE when necessary. We recommend moving your upper respiratory infection patients and those at risk – including patients in self-isolation – based on current guidelines, to appointments later in the day to minimize exposure to other patients and staff. N-95 masks are not required. [Contact and droplet precautions](#) | [Is COVID-19 airborne?](#)

### Updated testing protocols

AHS updated its testing protocols earlier this week. Albertans returning to the province after March 12 who have mild symptoms will no longer be tested for COVID-19. They will be asked to self-isolate at home and away from others. Testing will be prioritized for the following symptomatic patients:

- Hospitalized with respiratory illness
- Residents of continuing care, similar facilities
- Those who returned between March 8 and March 12
- Health care workers with respiratory symptoms

Those with symptoms who don't meet the criteria should stay home and isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the start of their symptoms, or until symptoms resolve – whichever is longer. The [online assessment tool](#) has been updated accordingly. [Read the bulletin](#). Physicians experiencing COVID-19 symptoms can call the physician-only line at 587-284-5302 to arrange swabbing. You MUST isolate until given further direction from Public Health or the Medical Officer of Health. Please also connect with your PCN to inform them of your change of status. We are monitoring the situation closely to help inform plans for maintaining primary care services in the Zone. [Testing FAQ for health professionals](#)

### Specialty care access

Given pandemic planning, access to ambulatory specialty care services will be significantly reduced, limited to urgent/emergent requests. Availability is expected to contract further. Please consider holding any non-urgent referrals at this time. Your PCN Zone team is working on the following:

- A care pathway for COVID-positive patients in the community to ensure ongoing access to a specialist team/imaging, as needed
- Increased tele-advice support via Specialist LINK
- Broadening the use of Specialist LINK to include urgent, non-RAAPID concerns
- Additional enhanced primary care pathways

### Links, 'source of truth'

Physicians can find the most up-to-date info about COVID-19 at [ahs.ca/covidphc](https://ahs.ca/covidphc). Patients can go to [ahs.ca/covid](https://ahs.ca/covid). We're collecting Calgary Zone-specific resources via [specialistlink.ca](https://specialistlink.ca). Other links you may find helpful: [Physician and Family Support Program](#) | [Use of ibuprofen](#) | [Relicensing/registration](#) | [Physician travel, symptoms](#)

### 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).