

COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone: PCN update #4 – April 2, 2020

Dear colleagues,

As we move into the next phase of the COVID-19 response, primary care has a vital role to play in supporting the care and management of patients in the community.

In the Calgary area, we're fortunate to have some of the structures and supports already in place to help maximize timely access and continuity of care through family physicians, the medical home and PCNs. We also need to adapt to the changing landscape and act quickly to ensure we can deliver a coordinated plan that works in harmony with our hospitals and provides for the needs of patients and providers.

Within the next week, we'll share more about these plans, which are based on a coordinated but decentralized approach to the assessment and management of at-risk COVID-19 patients, as well as those with mild to moderate symptoms who are suitable for home management. The foundational principles of this plan are as follows:

- **Timely access and continuity** with the primary care provider, Medical Home, and PCN
- **Physical, psychological and emotional safety** of patients and providers
- Support **business continuity and financial viability** for each PCN, member clinics and physicians
- Base decisions on the **best quality evidence** available at the time
- Allow for **flexible and adaptable solutions** that work for metro, urban and rural contexts
- **Use existing zone structures** to coordinate and implement COVID response strategy

You are not alone in this. We recognize the need to support physicians and medical homes in a variety of ways – inside and outside the medical home – and look forward to sharing these plans in the coming days. In the meantime, sincere thanks for your continued commitment to your patients and each other.



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



Dr. Ernst Greyvenstein
PCN Physician Lead,
Calgary Zone

Register for April 6 livestream: COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone

Find out more about how the Calgary Zone is preparing for the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in our next livestream, which takes place on Monday, April 6 from 6-8 p.m. In order to support our medical homes, we will be unveiling a care pathway and tele-advice line for management of COVID symptoms in the community, with specialist support. We'll also discuss plans to centralize care of patients with influenza-like symptoms who need hands-on assessment and treatment by a family physician. AHS is reviewing plans for treating sicker patients who need intervention. Register for the April 6 event here: <https://calgaryzonecovid19update.eventbrite.ca>

Video: March 30 COVID-19 education event

Thank you to everyone who tuned in for Monday's COVID-19 YouTube livestream, which had more than 900 views. Special thanks to our panel: Dr. Rick Ward, Dr. Christine Luelo, Dr. Margie Oakander, Dr. Jia Hu and Dr. John Gill. Video: [COVID-19 education event, March 30](#) | [Physician Q&A: Your questions answered, March 30](#) | Slides: [PCN update](#) | [mental health](#) | [public health](#) | [infectious disease](#)

Virtual care tips, resources

The plethora of virtual delivery options can feel overwhelming. Consider starting with phone calls and asking your staff to collect email addresses so you can start video conferencing later. It's worth considering unsecure (FaceTime) and secure (encrypted) vs. regulated (includes encrypted but Privacy Impact Assessment in place). The relaxing of rules during the pandemic means you can use unsecure and secure. For pre-existing codes 03.01 S and T you need regulated. Make sure you still use 03.05JR. Consider billing all 14 on Monday before shifting to AD and CV codes. [AMA webinar, virtual care resources](#) | [AMA billing corner: virtual codes](#) | [Crisis codes](#) | [Accessing Netcare from home](#) | [BMJ article](#)

In the Medical Home

Consider a virtual visit for all patients prior to bringing them in to your clinic. Many concerns can be managed this way. Postpone elective appointments. Symptomatic patients should complete the [online self-assessment](#) and call Health Link 811, as directed. Others should be screened when they book, a second time when they arrive (with signage and verbally at the front desk) and again when roomed. Following treatment, refer to the [self-isolation guidelines](#) before clearing patients to return to work.

Low risk patients

If patients are low risk, need care and aren't suitable for virtual visits (e.g. UTI, trauma), bring them into the clinic. If a patient needs care, is low risk for COVID-19 and not suitable for virtual care but has URI symptoms, consider booking them at the end of the day. Reduce panic by having these patients wait in the car until you are ready. Use a mask for them and full PPE for your team (a symptomatic patient wearing a mask reduces their ability to throw droplets but does not remove the risk). Chart who was in contact with the patient and what PPE you were wearing in case tracing is required. Consider the role of community paramedics, where appropriate. Home visits may be worth considering for some patients.

Physician, health care staff testing

An [online screening tool for health care workers](#) was released last week. Symptomatic physicians can then 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 connect with your PCN to inform them of your change of status. You should also log into your College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta portal to update your status and availability for AHS redeployment. [Self-isolation](#) | [FAQs](#)

Outpatient clinic visits, Imaging, labs

All non-urgent AHS ambulatory or outpatient clinic visits are postponed from April 1 to April 30. Some diagnostic imaging procedures have been postponed. Urgent or emergent outpatient CT or MRI scans will proceed. AHS will evaluate all semi-urgent and routine CT and MRI requests. Discontinue ordering non-essential tests. [Memo](#) | [Lab tests](#) | [X-rays](#) | [Ambulatory clinics](#) | [Pregnancy/postpartum info](#)

More information: Physicians can find the most up-to-date info at ahs.ca/covidphc; patients at ahs.ca/covid (in several different languages). Calgary-area resources are housed via the COVID-19 tab at specialistlink.ca. Please forward any questions or concerns to jake.jennings@calgaryareapcns.ca.