

primary cares

News & updates from the Calgary Zone

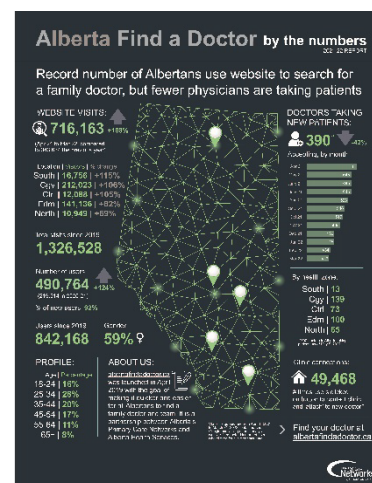


Demand for family doctors soars as availability declines

The demand for family doctors in the Calgary area and provincewide is soaring, with the albertafindadoctor.ca website reporting huge increases in visits over the past year as the number of physicians taking patients continues to decline.

The popular PCN online search tool, which aims to help patients find a family doctor, saw visits more than double from April 2021 to March 2022, compared to the previous year. A total of 716,163 visits during that period represented a 108 per cent increase on 2020-21, while the number of users increased 124 per cent to 490,764. Visits increased by more than 100 per cent in the south, Calgary, and central zones, while increasing by 92 per cent in the Edmonton area and 69 per cent in the north.

At the same time, the number of doctors taking patients fell provincewide from 731 in April 2021 to 390 by Thursday, May 5. The trend was mirrored in the Calgary area, where there were 323 doctors taking patients in April 2021, compared to 143 on Thursday, May 5. [Download the report.](#)



“The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of having a trusted health care provider and we are pleased that the Alberta Find a Doctor website has become such an important tool for Albertans,” said Dr. Ernst Greyvenstein, Primary Care Network Physician Lead for the Calgary Zone. “At the same time, we recognize that it is becoming harder to find a family doctor and availability is limited in some areas. While many organizations are working together on the challenging issue of physician recruitment, nurse practitioners are being added to the website as another potential option for those in need of care.”

The self-search tool available on albertafindadoctor.ca asks visitors to enter a location. Search results show both family doctors and nurse practitioners who are accepting new patients in that area.

Paxlovid, Remdesivir eligibility expanded

The [eligibility criteria](#) for Paxlovid and Remdesivir has been expanded in response to emerging evidence related to the risk of severe outcomes.

Treatment will be offered to patients at the highest risk of developing severe COVID-19 illness resulting in hospitalization. Eligibility is summarized below. You can also [download the memo](#).

Age	0-1 dose	2 doses	3 doses	Regardless of Vaccine Status
18+ with one or more pre-existing health conditions or pregnant	✓	✗	✗	✗
55+ or Indigenous 45+	✓	✗	✗	✗
60+ or Indigenous 50+ with one or more pre-existing health conditions	✓	✓	✗	✗
70+ or Indigenous 60+ with 2 or more pre-existing health conditions	✓	✓	✓	✗
Immunocompromised*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term care or designated supportive living	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Immunocompromised patients under the age of 18 should consult with their specialist. Transplant patients should not be offered Paxlovid.

Other Paxlovid updates are listed below:

- **Rebound symptoms:** In a small number of cases, patients have developed a relapse of COVID-19 symptoms within a few days of completing a course of treatment. This can be accompanied by a new positive test, after testing negative. It is not recommended that treatment is extended or repeated.
- **Long COVID:** Paxlovid should not be considered as a treatment option for patients experiencing symptoms of Long COVID.
- **Transplant patients:** These patients should not be given Paxlovid due to the potential for life-threatening drug interactions. Transplant patients should be referred to the outpatient COVID-19 treatment program at 1-844-343-0971, or the patient's specialist.
- **Public messaging:** Albertans are now being told to talk to their family doctor about Paxlovid eligibility if they tested positive for COVID-19 and their symptoms began less than four days ago. If you or your clinic is not prescribing, patients should call 1-844-343-0971. Clinics are asked to fax prescriptions to pharmacies instead of asking patients to take them in.
- **Other resources:** [Rapid Antigen Test Requisition](#) | [Pharmacy map](#) | [Provider FAQ](#)
- **Calgary Zone Paxlovid webinar:** Hear from members of the outpatient COVID treatment program, as well as local family physicians who are prescribing Paxlovid, at our next Calgary Zone webinar, on Monday, May 30, from 6-8 p.m. [Register](#).

NAFLD pathway updated

One of the most downloaded pathways on [specialistlink.ca](#) has been updated. The Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) pathway, which was originally developed in 2015, was recently updated by the Digestive Health Strategic Clinical Network. A Calgary Zone version of the pathway, which takes advantage of gold-standard shear wave elastography testing available in the Calgary Zone, has now been added to Specialist Link. [Download the pathway](#).

Calgary family physician of the year

Nominations are being accepted for the Department of Family Medicine's 2022 Family Physician of the Year award. Patients are encouraged to [vote online](#). A [social media post](#) can also be shared.

Quick links

Calgary Zone webinar details

On Monday, May 30, from 6–8 p.m., the next webinar in the Calgary Zone's COVID-19 and mental health series features a focus on Paxlovid prescribing. The mental health segment will include a new Calgary Zone anxiety pathway. [Register](#).

DBT video for health team members

A Dialectical Behaviour Therapy skills [training video](#) for health team members has been posted on the Specialist Link DBT [training page](#), which also includes skills training for physicians.

Choosing Wisely Canada online meeting

On Wednesday, May 25 and Thursday, May 26, Choosing Wisely Canada hosts its annual meeting, which is online this year. Keynote speeches are planned on overuse, choosing wisely and wellness, and taking action on climate change. The content is free, and participants can earn credits. [More details](#).

Reminder: Refugee response

A reminder that physicians are needed to help support the health needs of Afghan refugees who are arriving in the Calgary area. If you're interested in learning more about how to help, Mosaic PCN has developed an [information sign-up page](#).

Pearls for Family Practice: Cardiovascular risk reduction

On Friday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Cumming School of Medicine is offering a course on identifying strategies to reduce cardiovascular risk in patients with and without diabetes. [Register](#).

Disruption to palliative, end-of-life consultation services

On Saturday, May 28, the Calgary Zone's rural and urban palliative and end-of-life consultation teams will be going live on Connect Care. During the transition, consultation resources will be triaged for more urgent and complex patient care issues. Patients with less urgent or acute conditions may face longer waits. If the case is urgent, physicians are asked to call 403-944-2304 for urban and 403-995-2714 for rural.