

COVID-19 UPDATES

Pediatric vaccine rollout: Clinical considerations

Alberta released an [immunization update](#) for family physicians earlier this week as part of its pediatric vaccine rollout.

Effective Tuesday, November 23, bookings opened for children aged 5 to 11 to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech (Comirnaty) vaccine.

It is recommended that a complete series of the pediatric formulation is offered to those who do not have contraindications to the vaccine.

Alberta has adopted National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization (AACI) guidelines on optimal intervals between doses.

- For children aged five to 11, the dose interval should be at least eight weeks
- For those aged 12 and older, the recommended interval is now eight weeks for an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer and Moderna), and at least eight weeks for AstraZeneca, noting that mRNA vaccines are still recommended

The clinical considerations section of the [document](#) outlines the results of a clinical trial and instances of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. Highlights include:

- A clinical trial of over 3,000 young children showed vaccine efficacy against symptomatic COVID-19 was 90.7 per cent
- No cases of myocarditis/pericarditis or any other severe adverse events were reported in the trial. However, the sample size was too small to identify uncommon, rare or very rare adverse events
- No safety signals have been identified in the U.S., where the vaccine has been administered to more than three million children aged five to 11 since early November
- In Alberta, there have been 23 confirmed cases of myocarditis after COVID-19 vaccination in youths aged 12 to 17

Read the [update](#). Appointments for children aged five to 11 can be made [online](#) or via 811. Parent or guardian consent is required, either in person at the appointment or via a consent form.

Alberta also announced it is recommending that Pfizer is offered as the preferred choice of mRNA vaccine for those aged 12 to 29 to start and/or complete their primary series (including immunocompromised individuals who are eligible for a third dose). [More details](#).

Surplus PPE supplies

The Government of Alberta is offering surplus personal protective equipment (PPE), free of charge, to groups including primary care physicians.

The PPE, which includes hand sanitizer, medical and non-medical masks and disinfectant solutions, is being made available by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). AEMA is continuing to stockpile disinfectant solution and wipes, nitrile gloves, disposable gowns, hand sanitizer and disposable masks for future health emergencies. Alberta is also trading surplus PPE with other provinces and territories.

Physicians or clinics interested in obtaining surplus PPE should complete the [request form](#).

[Read the announcement](#).

For more information, please email MA.PPESupport@gov.ab.ca

Updated Long COVID pathway

Seven Specialist Link pathways have been updated to reflect new evidence and resources for the treatment of patients with long COVID and gastroenterology-related conditions.

The [Long COVID pathway](#), first published in the Calgary area in September, has been amended to include information about specialist long COVID clinics.

Referral information and forms can now be found on the [Alberta Referral Directory](#). Referrals can also be sent via Alberta Netcare eReferral Consult Requests, or via fax to pulmonary Central Access and Triage (CAT) at 403-592-4201. Further changes to referral processes are expected in the coming weeks; the pathway will continue to be updated as information becomes available.

Download the [Long COVID pathway](#). Video: [Recovering from Long Covid](#).

In addition, six gastroenterology clinical care pathways have been updated:

- [Chronic abdominal pain](#)
- [Chronic constipation](#)
- [Dyspepsia](#)
- [Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease \(GERD\)](#)
- [Helicobacter Pylori](#)
- [Irritable Bowel Syndrome](#)

Allergy medicine tele-advice has also been discontinued, effective Wednesday, December 1. The changes mean [Specialist Link](#), which has experienced rapid growth over the past two years, now offers 39 access and clinical care pathways and hosts 46 tele-advice services. Please reference our [tele-advice user guide](#).

Pediatric vaccination: The webinar

Pediatric vaccination and the role primary care can play in addressing hesitancy will be the focus of the next webinar in the PCN COVID-19 and mental health series.

On Monday, December 13, from 6-8 p.m., Dr. Rick Ward and Dr. Christine Luelo will be joined by a panel of experts to discuss the rollout of vaccines for five- to 11-year-olds and the critical part family physicians can play.

The online event will also feature an update on Specialist Link tele-advice — including the top 10 things you didn't know about the service, which links family doctors and specialists in real time. [Register](#).

Quick links

Scientific Advisory Group report: Venous thromboembolic events

The latest COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group rapid evidence brief examines evidence for screening and preventing venous thromboembolic events in patients with COVID-19. [Read the report](#).

COVID Corner

Wednesday, December 8, from 7-9 p.m. marks the final COVID Corner of 2021, titled *Keeping COVID Out: Optimizing Patient Care to Reduce Hospitalizations*. [More details](#).