

Calgary Zone

COVID-19 UPDATES



PCN webinar: Check in, checkup

Dr. Rick Ward and Dr. Christine Luelo will take the pulse of family physicians grappling with the impact of the fourth wave at the next webinar in the popular Calgary Zone PCN series.

On Monday, October 18, from 6-8 p.m., the co-hosts of the monthly COVID-19 and mental health live stream will lead a panel discussion on the challenges facing family practice. *Check in, checkup* will feature physicians working in different settings in both urban and rural family practice. The two-hour session will also include segments on pediatric vaccination and the latest COVID-19 science.

The mental health segment for the October webinar will focus on eating disorders.

[Register.](#)

Long COVID pathway

A [new pathway](#) has been developed to help support physicians who have patients presenting with long COVID, also known as post-COVID syndrome.

Care and management treatment protocols for patients who have long COVID are still evolving in the Calgary Zone and Alberta, as they are in most other jurisdictions. Long COVID is defined, for the purposes of the pathway, as signs and symptoms that develop during or after an infection consistent with COVID-19, continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis. Common symptoms include the following:

- Respiratory: Dyspnea, cough, chest pain
- Neurological: Fatigue, headache, loss of smell (anosmia), cognitive impairment, loss of taste (ageusia)
- Musculoskeletal: Muscle/joint pain (myalgia/arthralgia)
- Mental health: Sleep impairments, depression, anxiety

The pathway, developed for Calgary and area physicians, supports physicians with tools, checklists, and a guide to local resources. Housed on [specialistlink.ca](#), it will be updated as local support services and clinics emerge and evolve.

[Download the Long COVID pathway.](#)

The [COVID-19 adult pathway](#) has also been updated to reflect pregnancy as a “high risk” stratification.

Tele-advice changes

With the pressure on specialty care heightened by the impact of the fourth wave, some changes have been made to the surgical tele-advice services offered via [specialistlink.ca](#).

General surgery, which wasn't available in September, resumed service starting Friday, October 1. It replaces endocrine surgery, surgical oncology and hepatobiliary tele-advice, which have all been discontinued. Colorectal surgery and upper GI bariatrics were discontinued in September. All enquiries for the surgical sub-specialties can now be directed to general surgery.

General surgery tele-advice is available from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except statutory holidays). Requesting Specialist LINK tele-advice is simple: Visit [specialistlink.ca](#) and click on the desired speciality or sub-specialty. Enter a direct phone number or cell and have the patient's personal health number at hand. Calls are returned within one hour. Tele-advice can also be requested by calling 403-910-2551.

Immunization updates

Third-dose eligibility, quarantine recommendations and other measures introduced or amended in recent weeks are reflected in the updated [AHS immunization FAQ](#) for community physicians.

Alberta expanded its eligibility for an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday, September 21 to include more immunocompromised individuals, to align with [National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommendations](#). Patients with advanced HIV infection, immunodeficiency syndromes and those receiving high-dose systemic corticosteroids are among those now eligible. Residents of supportive living and congregate care facilities and Albertans who are travelling to a jurisdiction that does not accept visitors who have been immunized with Covishield/AstraZeneca or mixed doses are also eligible.

PPE ordering via AHS

Community physicians who want to order personal protective equipment direct from AHS will have the option of continuing to do so until March 31, 2022, following a decision to [extend the deadline](#) for this service. Please reference the [price list](#).

Quick links

Guidance on vaccine exemptions, ivermectin

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta recently shared updated guidance on [vaccination exemption requests](#), and [use of ivermectin](#) to treat or prevent COVID-19.

Dermatology referrals

The University of Calgary Dermatological Surgery Program at Richmond Road Diagnostic Treatment Centre has been expanded to improve access to care. Urgent referrals for biopsy-proven skin cancers can usually be seen within two weeks and routine referrals can be seen within four to eight weeks. Referrals should be faxed to 403-955-8200 with identified urgency. A photo, if possible, should be emailed to RRDTC.SurgicalDerm@ahs.ca. [Referral information](#).

COVID Corner

On Wednesday, October 13, from 7-9 p.m., the latest COVID Corner webinar will tackle *The Long Shadow of COVID: Reflecting on Moral Challenges*. [More details](#).