

# Pandemic RESPONSE

## COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone: PCN update — Jan. 7, 2022

With Omicron cases surging in the Calgary area and testing options limited, Dr. Christine Luelo shares some top tips for family practice.

- 1. Rapid test reporting tool:** We can no longer rely on lab reporting of PCR tests for most patients. Consider using this [helpful tool](#), developed by a local physician for your patients to self-report their at-home tests for your records. This can be helpful for insurance purposes, charting accuracy and for work flow when patients call to book a virtual appointment with you. The Alberta Medical Association's [simplified guide for clinic staff](#) may also be a useful resource.
- 2. Workplace transmission:** What can we do to reduce in-office transmission risk among staff? Everyone should be masked at all times, unless alone in a closed room. No exceptions! This is the time to be doing virtual care again, as much as possible, and having as few staff in office as possible for the necessary in-person care. The six-foot rule for eating is not enough with Omicron.
- 3. Return to work:** If you are a health-care provider and test positive, you can return to your community family practice to work if your symptoms have resolved after five days, as long as you continuously mask (different rule for long-term care and supportive living). Provider access to PCR testing is [available here](#).
- 4. Access to monoclonal treatment:** Sotrovimab is an effective and [available therapy](#) for high-risk patients, which is administered within five days of symptoms. Given testing delays, consider reaching out preventatively to your high-risk patients/unvaccinated patients to advise them of the importance of getting a test as soon as possible if they have ANY symptoms. The goal would be to ensure they are within that five-day window. The AHS [self assessment tool](#) helps patients to self identify if they are high risk and Health Link will help them to access this therapy.
- 5. Pathway to success:** While the [COVID-19 pathway](#) remains a useful tool for the surveillance and management of COVID-positive patients, its utility is limited by the current testing environment and the volume of symptomatic patients. What is most critical for family physicians to assess in the current landscape?
  - (a) Vaccine status: Unvaccinated patients should be followed more closely.
  - (b) Identify high-risk patients: Encourage vaccination (where possible!) and alert them early not to avoid action on symptoms. This could potentially allow them to access Sotrovimab via Health Link.
  - (c) If fully vaccinated, but not high risk, offer reassurance, advice on symptom management and symptom-specific treatments, as appropriate, and individualize the follow-up – many patients will not need a follow-up call.

**Share your top tips!** If you have clinic processes, workarounds, or ideas to share in future communications, please email them to [info@calgaryareapcns.ca](mailto:info@calgaryareapcns.ca).

## Other updates

---

### 1 Patient tool: Where to seek help

At a time when patients are often unsure how or where to seek help, the AMA has produced a [red-amber-green tool](#) for patients. More information and resources will be made available in the coming weeks.

### 2 Virtual fee codes

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta has approved a revised [Virtual Care Standard of Practice](#). Please also reference the [advice to the profession](#) document and the [AMA message](#).

### 3 PCN webinar coming soon!

How do we deal with the surge of Omicron cases in our medical homes, PCNs and the system as a whole? The next webinar in the PCN COVID-19 and mental health series, scheduled for Monday, January 17, from 6-8 p.m., will discuss the latest on the Omicron response in the Calgary area. [Register here](#).

### 4 AMA Omicron Update webinars

On Monday, January 3, the Alberta Medical Association hosted a webinar titled *Omicron update - Preparing for the post-holiday surge*. A recording is [available here](#). The next Omicron update is scheduled for Tuesday, January 11, at noon. [Register](#).

### 5 PPE reminder

A reminder to contact your PCN about how to order no-cost PPE, which is being available on a short-term basis. Face shields, gowns and KN95 respirators are available, in limited supplies, between now and February 28, 2022. [More details](#).

### 6 Information, updates

With evidence, resources and support changing rapidly, a [guidance document](#) has been produced that compiles updates on rapid testing, masking/PPE and other hot topics. A reminder that rapid testing for primary care is not yet available; test kits can be [ordered here](#).