

primary cares

News & updates from the Calgary Zone



Primary Care
Networks
CALGARY AND AREA

Virtual mental health codes

Amendments to virtual mental health codes in the Schedule of Medical Benefits (SOMB) have come into effect, meaning physicians can start billing, retroactive to October 23, 2023. The changes, first announced in November 2023, mean the following:

- HSC 08.19CW will change from “per full 15 minutes” to “per 15 minutes or major portion thereof”
- New fee codes are in effect for virtual group therapy (HSCs 08.44AV, 08.44BV, 08.44CV, 08.44DV) and family therapy services (HSCs 08.45V, 08.45AV)
- A new fee code is in place for virtual psychiatric treatment (HSC 08.19GV) of complex patients
- New fee codes have been created for prolonged virtual consultations (HSCs 03.08IV, 03.08JV) and prolonged virtual repeat office visit or scheduled outpatient visit (HSC 03.03FT) for physician skill codes that are currently eligible for select prolonged services

[Read the bulletin.](#)

The FIB-4 paradigm shift

Dr. Abdel Aziz Shaheen will discuss the “paradigm shift” in FIB-4 testing at next month’s Calgary Zone webinar.

On Monday, February 26, from 6–8 p.m., Dr. Shaheen and Dr. Mark Swain will discuss several topics related to liver health, including FIB-4 testing as it relates to the non-alcoholic fatty liver disease pathway, cirrhosis repatriation and alcohol use disorder liver scanning.

The [webinar](#) will feature the usual primary care hot topics, and the Department of Family Medicine’s Family Physician of the Year awards.

Physicians attending the virtual webinar live will be eligible to apply for Mainpro+ credits.

[Register.](#)

General surgery set for central access launch

General surgery is the latest group to be added to the Facilitated Access to Specialized Treatment (FAST) program, with a launch planned for the Calgary area on Monday, February 26.

FAST is a central access and intake program that receives surgical referrals and sends them to a specific provider, clinic or site, to a next-available surgeon with the shortest wait time, or an out of Zone provider. Orthopaedics, urology and vascular surgery have already been added to FAST. A new general referral form will be available soon. [More information](#).

General surgery and adult vascular surgery referral pathways are now on specialistlink.ca.

Menopause symptom eReferral advice

Non-urgent menopause symptom advice is now available via eReferral Advice Requests.

Questions can be submitted via Alberta Netcare, with responses from a specialist received within five calendar days. [More information](#).

Strep A resources

Physicians and teams are asked to be aware of the signs and symptoms of group A streptococcal (GAS) and invasive group A streptococcal (iGAS) infections following an increase in reported cases.

GAS can cause infections including pharyngitis, skin and soft tissue infections, and less commonly, scarlet fever, rheumatic fever, necrotizing fasciitis and toxic shock syndrome. Symptoms can include swelling, chills, muscle and joint aches, macular rash, bullae, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, malaise and pain of unusual severity. Antibiotic treatment is recommended for those with confirmed GAS pharyngitis.

Please reference the [Alberta Disease Management Guidelines for GAS and iGAS](#). Information for the management of GAS pharyngitis in children can be found at cps.ca. The Government of Canada also has information about group A streptococcal diseases for [health professionals](#).

Reminder: Transgender health tele-advice

Physicians and nurse practitioners in the Calgary area can now turn to Specialist Link for non-urgent transgender health advice.

Transgender health is the latest tele-advice service added to Specialist Link's growing roster of specialty advice services. It is available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday (except statutory holidays). Visit specialistlink.ca to request tele-advice.

Quick links

Have your say on healthcare reform

The Government of Alberta has created an online portal for Albertans to have their say on the future of health care in the province. The feedback form takes about 15 minutes to complete and is open to all. [Have your say](#). The online form is in addition to a series of town halls or in-person engagement sessions. [More information](#).

Cardiovascular disease risk screening webinar

On Tuesday, February 13, from 7–8 p.m., Calgary West Central PCN is hosting a practice improvement webinar focused on CVD risk screening and tracking. Registration is open to all PCN member physicians in the Calgary Zone. [More information](#).

Choosing Wisely on bronchiolitis

On Wednesday, January 31, at 10 a.m., Choosing Wisely Talks will discuss on why less is best for bronchiolitis. [Register](#). Registration is also open for Choosing Wisely Canada's 10th anniversary meeting, which takes place on Monday, April 15 and Tuesday, April 16, in-person in Montreal, Quebec, and online. [More information](#).

Mobile screening in Canmore, Banff, Didsbury

The Screen Test mobile initiative, which provides screening mammograms, is visiting several rural Calgary communities over the next two months. That includes Didsbury from Thursday, January 25 to Tuesday, January 30, Canmore from Tuesday, January 30 to Monday, February 5 and Banff, from Monday, February 5 to Friday, February 9. [More information](#).

Sports medicine webinar

Starting Wednesday, February 7, from 7–8 p.m., the University of British Columbia is hosting a weekly virtual conference on sports medicine. [More details](#).