

primary cares

News & updates from the Calgary Zone



Infectious disease webinar

The next webinar in the Calgary Zone's popular series will examine the fall respiratory virus situation in the Calgary area.

On Monday, November 18, from 6–8 p.m., Dr. Jim Kellner will lead a session on influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19. In addition, Dr. Christine Luelo will lead her regular Hot Topics segment and there will be an update on AHS bariatric clinic process changes in the context of more patients asking for active management of obesity.

There will also be a discussion about the December launch of four new surgical specialties on the Facilitated Access to Specialist Treatment central access program: Plastic surgery, neurosurgery, otolaryngology and oral maxillofacial surgery.

[Register.](#)

Instant replay: A recording of the September neurodiversity and non-melanoma skin cancer webinar can now be [watched online](#).

Immunization program

Alberta's immunization program kicked off earlier this week, with influenza and COVID-19 vaccines available for Albertans aged six months and older.

RSV immunization is also available for Albertans aged 60 and older who are residents of continuing care homes or supportive living, as well as those aged 75 and older in the community.

- **Influenza:** A four-strain injectable standard dose can be [booked online](#) or by calling 811. Some pharmacies are also offering walk-ins. A higher-dose vaccine may be available for certain individuals. [More information.](#)
- **COVID-19:** Only mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are available. They include the updated KP.2 strain, which is expected to provide a better immune response against the SARS-CoV-2 variants currently circulating. [More information.](#)
- **RSV:** Appointments can be [booked online](#), by calling 811 or through participating pharmacies. Abrysvo is not provincially funded for pregnant individuals or Albertans 60

to 74 years of age who live in the community. They can access the vaccine if it is covered via private health insurance or if they want to pay. [More information](#).

Check out the [respiratory virus dashboard](#).

The Cold Standard: A fourth edition of the Cold Standard toolkit, which addresses the management of respiratory tract infections, can be [downloaded here](#).

Viral haemorrhagic fever testing, outbreaks: Primary care providers are being advised to be aware of risks related to an outbreak of Marburg virus haemorrhagic fever (VHF) in Rwanda. If there is clinical concern, place the patient in a single room on contact and droplet precautions. Please consult the medical officer of health on call before ordering tests. [Read the lab bulletin](#).

Patient referral issue

More than 3,000 referrals in the Calgary Zone are thought to have been affected by a patient referral workflow issue that was discovered during a Connect Care audit.

Some patient referrals to external healthcare providers who don't use Connect Care were not processed and delayed as a result. The issue does not affect providers who are using Connect Care. It only applies to referrals to external providers (e.g., specialty clinics and allied health professions, such as physiotherapists) who are not Connect Care users.

AHS has said that patients who are adversely affected will receive a phone call to notify them of the situation. All referrals are being reviewed to assess the potential clinical impact of a delay. Patients deemed most urgent will be contacted first.

Clinical teams are assessing the delayed referrals and scheduling patient appointments with external providers or AHS care teams as quickly as possible. All patients who have potentially had their health significantly impacted by these delayed referrals are being notified directly.

[More information](#).

Primary Care Alberta set to be launched

Kim Simmonds has been appointed chief executive officer of Primary Care Alberta, the new provincial health agency that is due to be launched within the next few weeks.

The current assistant deputy minister of strategic planning and performance at Alberta Health, Simmonds has a background in epidemiology and policy development.

Primary Care Alberta is one of four sector-based health agencies being created to coordinate health services. Health Minister Adriana LaGrange said Primary Care Alberta will be “up and running by November 1.”

[Watch the announcement.](#) [More details.](#)

Transition to regional networks: The Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System (MAPS) initiative has released a summary of the regional networks transition project. It includes a timeline, engagement summary and a list of the core responsibilities of networks. [Download the summary.](#) Questions about MAPS can be directed to health.MAPS@gov.ab.ca.

Ortho rapid access clinics

Four rapid access clinics have been established in the Calgary area with the aim of reducing wait times for patients referred for orthopedic surgery consultation.

The clinics use multidisciplinary teams to diagnose, determine the need for surgical consultation and provide non-surgical management strategies, where appropriate.

The following orthopedic rapid access clinics are now operating, in a pilot phase. Referrals for orthopedics should be submitted, as usual, via Facilitated Access to Specialist Treatment (FAST), to 1-833-627-7023, except for oncology and pediatric orthopaedics, as well as spine surgery. A reminder that spine referrals should be sent directly to the spine clinic or surgeon of your choice. Patients may be directed to rapid access clinics to reduce wait times.

- Access orthopedics: Shoulder
- University of Calgary Sport Medicine Centre: Shoulder
- Banff Sport Medicine: Shoulder
- Alberta Hip and Knee Clinic (Gulf Canada Square): Hip and knee osteoarthritis

Download the [orthopedic access pathway](#).

Gynecology referrals: Due to long wait times for routine gynecology consultations, referrals submitted via FAST may be sent to clinics in areas surrounding Calgary for faster processing.

Referrals submitted through FAST are distributed to the next available surgeon, which could include those in High River or Canmore, for example. If your patient is not able to travel to appointments, please include that information in the referral letter or on the referral form.

FAST referrals should be sent to 1-833-627-7023. Download the gynecology [referral form](#) or the [referral pathway](#).

Arthur Child transition

Several programs and services have started transitioning to the new Arthur J.E. Child Comprehensive Cancer Centre (Arthur Child), which opens later this month.

- There is a new fax and phone number for adult palliative care referrals for facility living and community (urban): 587-231-3665. The change is due to adult palliative teams moving to Arthur Child, effective Thursday October 17. Please reference the updated Calgary Zone [palliative care access pathway](#).

- Multiple testing laboratories at Alberta Precision Laboratories will also move to Arthur Child later this month. That includes outpatient collections and point of care testing. For general enquiries, continue to contact the provincial line at 1-877-868-6848 or email apl.clientservices@albertaprecisionlabs.ca. [Read the lab memo](#).

Arthur Child is set to open its doors to patients on Monday, October 28. [More information](#).

Lung screening pilot closes

The Alberta Lung Cancer Screening Program pilot is no longer accepting new patients for screening, either through primary care providers or via self-referral.

The program reached its threshold of 3,800 patients and the pilot is now closed. Patients who were already enrolled will see no change to their care or ability to receive low-dose CT scans. Annual and early recall screening will be conducted using low-dose CT. Any lung nodule or possible lung cancer findings will be managed by the program.

[More information](#).

Quick links

2024 Mackid Symposium

On Thursday, November 28, from 5:30–9:30 p.m., the Department of Family Medicine is hosting the 2024 Mackid Symposium at the Markin MacPhail Centre. [More details](#).

Save the date: Primary Care Strategic Forum

The 2025 Primary Care Strategic Forum will be held from May 1–3, 2025, at the Westin Edmonton. [More information](#).

Choosing Wisely Canada: Call for submissions

Submissions are being accepted for Choosing Wisely Canada's national meeting, which takes place in Winnipeg on Monday, May 26 and Tuesday, May 27, 2025. [More information](#).

Provider communication skills

The All Providers Better Communication Skills (ABCs) virtual education program is being offered free of charge to all health care providers. It offers practical tools, tips and strategies to improve your communication skills when communicating with seriously ill patients and their loved ones. The deadline to register is Monday, November 4. [More information](#).

Billing education seminars

On Tuesday, November 5 and Tuesday, November 12, the Alberta Medical Association is hosting billing seminars with a focus on family medicine. The [November 5 virtual event](#), which

takes place from 6 – 8:30 p.m., features family medicine office visits and procedures, including WCB claims. The [November 12 session](#) features on-call ER, rural rotation duty ER, hospital inpatient work and long term care.

HQCA: Patient Experience Awards

Submissions for the Health Quality Council of Alberta’s Patient Experience Awards are being accepted until Friday, November 18. [More information](#).