

COVID-19 UPDATES

Alberta moves to Phase 3 of vaccine rollout

All Albertans over the age of 12 will soon be able to make an appointment to receive a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine as the province moves to Phase 3 of its immunization campaign. The announcement followed [Health Canada authorizing](#) use of the Pfizer vaccine in children 12 to 15 years of age.

Bookings will be opened up for an mRNA vaccine in the following two stages:

- Effective Thursday, May 6, all Albertans aged 30 or older can book an appointment [online](#) or via [participating pharmacies](#)
- Effective Monday, May 10, booking eligibility will expand to include Albertans aged 12 to 29

About 1.66 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to date in Alberta. About 3.8 million Albertans are eligible for the vaccine with the opening up of Phase 3.

[More details.](#)

Banff clinic joins community vaccine initiative

A small group of community clinics will be part of efforts to vaccinate Albertans in COVID-19 “hot spots” this weekend as plans for a broader rollout continue to move forward.

The Government of Alberta has deployed additional vaccine supply to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, as well as Banff and the surrounding areas, which includes Lake Louise and Canmore. In both areas, residents aged 18 and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination.

Community clinics in Banff (Alpine Medical Clinic) and Fort McMurray, in addition to other existing pilot sites, have received a small amount of vaccine and will begin offering immunization to patients as soon as this weekend.

To help prepare for a broader community clinic rollout, as vaccine becomes available, clinics that submitted an Expression of Interest to offer COVID-19 immunization to patients were contacted by the Alberta Medical Association on Friday and asked to set up an additional Alberta Vaccine Inventory (AVI) account by May 15.

The request would potentially allow clinics to order vaccine directly, rather than manually, as was the case with the 10-clinic pilot project.

A large-scale clinic rollout is still tentatively planned for later this month or June. More details are expected to be confirmed shortly. A recording of the Alberta Medical Association's Friday, April 30 *Community COVID Vaccination Proof of Concept* webinar is [available here](#).

For more information about the Expression of Interest and AVI request, please email backthevax@albertadoctors.org.

Vaccination webinar

Watch the [recording](#) of the *Vaccines and Community Vaccination* PCN webinar from Monday, May 3, which included a presentation from Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Deena Hinshaw and a mental health moment on addiction medicine.

A physician [Q&A](#) document is available, as are the [presentation slides](#). Take the [evaluation survey](#).

Webinar topics and links to their start times in the recording:

- Mental health moment: Addiction medicine with Dr. Monty Ghosh ([skip to 1:14](#))
 - Vaccines, with Dr. Deena Hinshaw ([skip to 29:59](#))
 - Department of Family Medicine Physician of the Year Awards ([skip to 1:00.30](#))
 - Community vaccination, by Dr. Ernst Greyvenstein ([skip to 1:14.03](#))
 - Family practice "grab bag," with Dr. Christine Luelo ([skip to 1:34.13](#))
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Meat-packing plants initiative expands

Efforts to vaccinate workers at meat-packing plants throughout the province stepped up this week following the successful conclusion of a pilot project at Cargill in High River.

Supported by PCN physicians Dr. Adam Vyse and Dr. Annalee Coakley, 1,638 workers were immunized at Cargill in a day and a half. Organizers had expected it to take three days to complete the pilot.

This week, Highland PCN supported efforts to vaccinate employees at Cargill Case Ready, Lilydale and Harmony Beef.

Meat-packing plant workers are being offered immunization through a variety of approaches, including on-site clinics, pharmacies and Alberta Health Services (AHS) clinics, as part of Phase 2C.

[More details](#).

Variant testing scaled back

In an effort to reduce the turnaround time for baseline COVID-19 swabs, Alberta is now performing COVID-19 variants of concern testing for only the following groups:

- Hospital and emergency room patients
- Patients involved in outbreaks
- Health-care workers
- Recent international travellers

The change, which came into effect Saturday, May 1, means physicians can expect to receive fewer reports confirming that a positive case involves a variant. [More details.](#)

As the majority of cases are B.1.1.7 it is recommended that physicians continue to follow the [adult pathway](#). Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 are required to isolate for 10 days or until symptoms resolve (whichever is longer). Close contacts are required to [isolate](#) for 14 days.

[Updated immunization FAQ.](#)

Note no longer required for youth vaccination

Children aged 12-15 with eligible [health conditions](#) can continue to book vaccine appointments and no longer require a note from their physicians or health-care providers to qualify for the Pfizer vaccine.

It was announced last week that youths aged 12-15 with high-risk underlying health conditions can now receive the vaccine. A requirement to demonstrate proof of eligibility via a doctor's note was walked back following discussions with physician leaders.

Verbal consent from a parent or guardian is still required at the appointment. A printed and signed letter of consent from them will suffice if the youth is alone. Proof of identity with the youth's birthdate is also necessary.

The requirement for consent will continue with the wider rollout for those born in 2009 or earlier, which begins Monday, May 10.

[More information.](#)

Restrictions introduced

New restrictions came into effect this week that affect outdoor social gatherings, schools, retail, restaurants, places of worship, personal and wellness services, outdoor sports and fitness, funerals and post-secondary institutions.

The restrictions apply to all municipalities with more than 50 cases per 100,000 people and with 30 or more active cases – which includes all communities in Calgary and the surrounding areas. The restrictions will remain in place for at least three weeks.

Some of the restrictions take effect on different dates, including:

- Post-secondary schools transitioned to online learning, effective Wednesday, May 5
- Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools transitioned to online learning Friday, May 7. They are due to return to in-class learning on Tuesday, May 25
- Effective Sunday, May 9 at 11:59 p.m., in-person dining, including on patios, is not permitted. Restaurants, pubs, bars, lounges, cafes and food courts can open for takeout, curbside pickup and delivery only
- Indoor fitness facilities were ordered to close, effective Wednesday, May 5
- Beginning Sunday, May 9, indoor sport, performance and recreation activities, as well as team sports – including practice – is also not permitted

[More details](#)

Quick links

Cancer and COVID-19 information for patients

AHS has a [document](#) for patients and their families about cancer treatment and COVID-19, including information about the vaccines, symptoms, and appointments.

COVID Corner webinar

On Wednesday, May 12 at 7 p.m., the next two-hour webinar in the University of Calgary's series, *Vaccines vs. Variants (Part 2)*, will take place. [Register](#).