

COVID-19 UPDATES

Thursday, March 4, 2021

Alberta expanding second-dose window

Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health, [announced](#) on Wednesday, March 3 that Alberta is adopting the National Advisory Committee on Immunization's recommendation to extend the period between first and second dose up to four months.

Effective Wednesday, March 10, anyone who books their immunization appointment for their first dose will receive a reminder later to book their second dose, so that as many Albertans as possible can get their first shot.

Anyone who already has an appointment for a second dose or who books before Wednesday, March 10 will keep their second-dose appointments as scheduled.

Research from other jurisdictions indicate that one dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine provides significant protection, with Canadian data indicating 80 per cent protection after the initial dose, which lasts up to four months.

Zone webinar recording

Watch the [recording](#) of the two-hour Calgary Zone PCN webinar from Monday, March 1 for a mental health moment on child and adolescent suicide risk, general clinical pearls, and answers for COVID-19 conundrums.

You can also review the COVID-19 and mental health [questions and answers](#) stemming from the event and the [presentation slides](#).

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

- Mental health moment: Child and adolescent suicide risk by Andrew Baxter (skip to [4:12](#))
- Clinical pearls and panel discussion:
 - Infectious Disease and Specialist LINK with Dr. Bonnie Meatherall (skip to [33:45](#))
 - Public Health with Dr. Jia Hu (skip to [41:30](#))

- Post-COVID-19 care with Dr. Brian Cornelson (skip to [49:44](#))
- Labs update with Julia Hendry and Dr. Nathan Zelyas (skip to [56:51](#))
- Primary Care Networks with Dr. Janet Reynolds and Nicole Gleeson (skip to [1:10:18](#))
- Q&A and panel discussion on COVID-19 conundrums (skip to [1:21:26](#))

[Register](#) for the next webinar in the Calgary Zone mental health and COVID-19 series on Tuesday, April 6 at 6 p.m.

AHS FAQ update

Alberta Health Services (AHS) has separated the FAQ for community physicians into three updated FAQs on [immunization](#), [infection prevention and control and exposure](#), and [patient care and testing](#).

Some key new items and updates:

- Physicians do not need to prescribe or give a client-specific order to a patient for a COVID-19 vaccine
 - Patients who develop COVID-19 symptoms after their immunization must isolate even if it appears the symptoms are side effects of the vaccine
 - If the symptoms start within 24 hours of immunization and end within 48 hours of starting, patients can return to normal activities. Otherwise, they must follow existing isolation protocols.
 - Early evidence is emerging that the current vaccines may be less effective against the variants of concern in preventing all COVID-19 symptoms. Still, they do appear to be extremely effective at preventing the important outcomes of severe cases, including hospitalizations and deaths.
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Immunization booking improvements

AHS has improved access for eligible Albertans booking COVID-19 immunization appointments through Health Link (811) and have [stabilized](#) the online booking tool. Although load testing was done in advance, it was not done to the capacity seen on February 24, which resulted in the challenges.

With increased server capacity, additional Health Link phone lines and staff, and implementation of a queuing tool for both phone and computer options, patients should now have a more appropriate experience.

The combined Health Link and online tool options can accommodate about 5,000 bookings an hour. Albertans can also book an immunization appointment at [participating pharmacies](#).

In addition, Albertans calling Health Link at 811 now have the choice of directing their call to book an immunization appointment or to reach a registered nurse for a medical concern.

Wellness training, resources

Well Doc Alberta offers training for groups of physicians who want to develop a formalized peer support team, including community physicians and rural physicians.

Their physician peer support team training is a three-step process:

1. Initial consultation
2. Information session with group leadership on how to develop peer support (one hour)
3. Formal peer support team training workshop (4.5 hours)

Contact Well Doc Alberta at welldocalberta@ucalgary.ca to get started.

Throughout the pandemic, they also developed multiple [educational resources](#) to support physician wellness:

- Education bulletins with evidence-informed information and tips on areas such as peer support, mindfulness and sleep strategies.
- Podcast episodes with evidence-based discussion from content experts on topics such as self-awareness, wellness on the front-line, and empathy and compassion.
- Webinars with experts on parenting as a physician, physician wellness and finding meaning, and the pandemic as a test of system-level physician wellness.

Quick links

Moral distress Zoom room

On Tuesday, March 9 at 5 p.m., the next biweekly Physician Wellness Zoom Room is on moral distress to offer physicians a community of practice. [Zoom link](#).

COVID Corner webinar

On Wednesday, March 10 at 7 p.m., the U of C's COVID Corner series hosts a two-hour webinar, *Vaccines vs. Variants*, on the variants, efficacy of vaccines, and the impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions and public health measures to prevent future waves. [Register](#).

COVID-19 Pivot

On Tuesday, March 23 at 10 a.m., the College of Family Physicians of Canada hosts the next one-hour webinar in the COVID-19 Pivot series, *Putting vaccines into action and more updates*, with Dr. Isaac Bogoch, Dr. Noni MacDonald and Dr. Morgan Price. [Register](#).

AHS immunization poster

AHS has a [poster](#) promoting how Albertans born in 1946 or earlier can book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment at one of their sites. Physicians can download and share.

Immunocompromised individuals and vaccine guidance

AHS released [guidance](#) with a summary of considerations for healthcare providers to inform pre-immunization assessments of immunocompromised individuals.