

# COVID-19 UPDATES

## Calgary Zone PCN webinar (recording)

Watch the [recording](#) of the monthly Calgary Zone PCN webinar from Monday, February 1 for information about managing alcohol use disorder, a science update on variants and the vaccine, and family practice's role in promoting immunization.

A new [four-minute video](#) is also now available featuring Dr. Christine Luelo demonstrating how to use the [PrOTCT Plan](#) in a vaccine discussion with a patient (played by Dr. Rick Ward).

The PrOTCT tool involves proactively talking to patients, offering to share knowledge, tailoring recommendations, addressing specific concerns and talking through a plan.

Webinar recording topics, their start times in the [recording](#) for ease of navigation and slides (if available):

- Mental health moment on alcohol use disorder by Dr. Tim Ayas (3:29); [slides](#), or view his presentation as a [standalone video](#)
- Mental health Q&A with Dr. Ayas and Dr. Ward (22:22)
- Alcohol and opioids with Dr. Luelo (31:54); [slides](#)
- COVID-19 science update (variants and vaccines) from Dr. Michael Parkins (35:48)
- Provincial immunization strategy (advocacy and rollout) by Dr. Mike Spady and Laurie Blahitka (57:48)
- Overview of patient survey on immunization by Dr. Ward (1:12:50); [slides](#)
- Primary care's approach to vaccine hesitancy with Dr. Cora Constantinescu (1:18:40); [slides](#)
- Promoting vaccine uptake with Dr. Luelo (1:40:00); [slides](#)
- Questions and comments (1:47:20); [Physician Q&A](#) from the webinar

You can now [register](#) for the next live webinar about COVID-19, variants and the latest science to be held on Monday, March 1 at 6 p.m.

All past recordings and available slides are in Specialist LINK's [COVID-19 resources](#).

# COVID-19 variants update

AHS has formed a dedicated variant [contact tracing team](#) to conduct a prompt and enhanced investigation each time a variant case is found.

Due to increased transmissibility of variant COVID-19 strains, if a case chooses to isolate at home, their household contacts in that same home during the index case's quarantine must start their 14 days from the LAST DAY of the index case's possible infectiousness, EVEN IF THE INDEX CASE SEPARATES WITHIN THE HOME. This would mean a total of 24 days.

Therefore, AHS is ensuring that new cases linked to a variant COVID-19 virus and their contacts are aware of isolation hotels and quarantine options to avoid this longer quarantine.

Alberta is actively [monitoring](#) for the new variant strains of COVID-19 and has detected cases of the strains first identified in the U.K. (B1.1.7) and South Africa (B.1.351) in the province.

International scientific and public health communities are working to understand the new strains, including the variant identified in Brazil (P.1).

The strains are considered variants of concern because early evidence suggests they are more contagious; however:

- [Symptoms](#) of the variants are the same as the original virus
- Method of transmission appears to be the [same](#)
- Studies, so far, suggest authorized vaccines [remain effective](#) against the variants

More information is available from [AHS](#) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [website](#).

---

## Self-isolation support expanded

Effective immediately, [all Albertans](#) are eligible for the \$625 payment after completing their self-isolation in an assigned hotel if they cannot safely isolate at home.

The self-isolation supports available following referral by AHS are:

- Payment of \$625 after completing self-isolation in the assigned hotel
- Free hotel room stay for up to 14 days with culturally appropriate food

Initially, the financial support was limited to areas of Calgary and Edmonton, but it is now available for Albertans across the province, including First Nations people on and off reserve and individuals living on Metis settlements.

Albertans who need to access an isolation hotel to quarantine or isolate can call 211 to request assistance.

Criteria:

- Need to self-isolate
  - No access to a private bathroom and bedroom away from others
  - Cannot access food without contact with others
- 

## AMA vaccine toolkit

The AMA has developed the *Be a Vaccine Positive Clinic* [toolkit](#), which provides support for primary care physicians and their teams in conversations with patients about the COVID-19 vaccine.

The toolkit was created with guidance from physician leaders to ensure the information and resources are relevant to physicians and clinic staff when discussing the COVID-19 vaccines with patients.

The [toolkit](#) includes:

- Evidence and information on vaccine safety and efficacy
- Patient materials to inform them about the vaccines
- Considerations for vaccinating special populations
- Information about reporting adverse events
- Materials to support vaccine promotion
- Scripts and EMR tools to address vaccine hesitancy (in development)

The information contained in the toolkit is being updated frequently to coincide with new information about the COVID-19 vaccines. It is strongly encouraged that you check back regularly to ensure you are using the most up-to-date information.

---

## Grant opportunity

The Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine and the CMA Foundation have opened the [request for proposals](#) for Phase 2 of the COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Impact Grant Program.

Phase 2 focuses on supporting innovations and initiatives that prepare family physicians and their health teams to cope with current pandemic challenges or its longer-term impact.

- Funding possible for projects for up to 18 months
- Maximum \$250,000 per project
- Applicants are required to complete the [online registration](#) by 2 p.m. on Tuesday, February 16 to be eligible to submit a full application

Applications must be linked to a priority domain:

- Responding to priority populations
-

- Developing effective intersectional collaboration
- Training future family physicians and providing continuing professional development related to pandemic planning and response
- Developing innovative models of care or practice to ensure safe, continuous, accessible, and comprehensive care is available to all patients
- Safeguarding the health and safety of healthcare providers and team members

Projects may involve scaling up existing innovations or new initiatives that respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The principal applicant must be a member of the CFPC who has been in good standing for at least one year.

---

## Quick links

### International air travel update

In response to the new variants, the Canadian government [suspended](#) all flights to and from Mexico and Caribbean countries on Sunday, January 31. They will also soon introduce a new [requirement](#) for travellers to take a test upon arrival in Canada and stay in a hotel for three days while they wait for their test results.

### The Shadow Pandemic (Part Two) webinar

On Wednesday, February 10 at 7 p.m., the U of C's COVID Corner series will host the two-hour *The Shadow Pandemic (Part Two)* webinar on the impact of the pandemic on children, their families and the frail elderly as well as strategies to minimize it. [Register](#)

### Keeping kids healthy, happy in a pandemic webinar

On Monday, February 22 at 7:30 p.m., the Cumming School of Medicine and the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute host a one-hour webinar on the mental impacts and inequities for parents and children with neurodiverse needs and the long-term effects of pregnancy in a pandemic. [Register](#)

### Calgary Zone PCN webinar

On Monday, March 1 at 6 p.m., the next two-hour Calgary Zone mental health and COVID-19 webinar on COVID-19, variants and the latest science will stream live. [Register](#)

### ACFP's Virtual Family Medicine Summit

From Friday, March 5 to Sunday, March 7, the ACFP's Virtual Family Medicine will cover [multiple topics](#), including several related to COVID-19 such as the virus's impact on mental health and long-term care. Early bird pricing ends Monday, February 15. [Register](#)