

COVID-19 UPDATES

Timely follow-up care for COVID-19 patients

With a surge of COVID-19 cases in Calgary and the surrounding areas, PCN leadership would like to highlight the critical role community physicians play in providing timely follow-up care to patients who test positive.

PCN access clinics are currently receiving more than 400 patient notifications daily, which is more than double their previous capacity. These clinics can no longer provide immediate support to all patients.

Physicians should now be receiving notifications of patients' COVID-19 positive status in their EMRs (when the provider is identified on lab requisitions) and from other sources, including faxed PCN admit-discharge notifications and calls from patients and PCNs. COVID-19 test results are also accessible through Netcare.

We recognize many patient test results are not reaching physicians. PCN leadership is collaborating with AHS and public health to make urgent improvements and advocating strongly for the timely delivery of direct copies of patient test results.

All seven Calgary Zone PCNs collaborate through their access clinics to triage and care for patients who do not have a family physician or cannot reach their doctor.

In the meantime, please note:

- Results should be pushed to EMRs twice daily in your regular lab downloads (once daily for hard-copy labs)
- Patients are screened for severe symptoms and directed to appropriate care at the time of their appointment booking
- It is critical that primary care providers and teams reach out to provide timely follow-up care to patients, as per the Calgary Zone [adult pathway](#)
- The [pediatric pathway](#) can also be referenced for guidance about clinical care
- Make a weekend plan for your clinic; contact your PCN about whether your access clinic could help with coverage

The role of access clinics and family physicians in the COVID-19 response was featured extensively in Monday evening's [Calgary Zone webinar](#), which was viewed by more than 600 physicians and healthcare workers. Dr. Christine Luelo's slides on the [patient journey](#) in the Calgary Zone are a useful resource. All slides are available via [specialistlink.ca](#).

Public health measures

Targeted public health measures were announced by the Alberta Government on Tuesday in response to the increasing spread of COVID-19. They include:

- No indoor social gatherings
- Outdoor gatherings limited to a maximum of 10 people
- Indoor close contacts limited to people in the same household; those living alone can have two household contacts
- Indoor restrictions do not apply to visits from caregivers or health or childcare providers
- Primary care clinics continue to be able to see patients in person when appropriate
- Work and support group meetings are not considered social gatherings
- Maximum of 10 people at weddings and funeral services, with no receptions
- No festivals or events
- Grades 7 - 12 home learning from Monday, November 30 to January 11; Grades K - 6 from Friday, December 18 to Monday, January 11
- Restricted access to some businesses and services, beginning Friday, November 27
- Mandatory masks for indoor workplaces (Calgary area)

Review the [new measures](#).

Contact tracing update

AHS is temporarily focusing contact tracing on the most recently diagnosed before working backward to prioritize cases with the greatest chance to reduce transmission.

Due to the growing backlog of cases, they will:

- No longer contact individuals to conduct tracing if 10 days have passed since the positive test
- Send all Albertans who test positive a text message with guidance on when their isolation period ends
- Direct them to notify their close contacts with an automated text message

AHS prioritized follow-up for healthcare workers and those in continuing care, and they should not be part of the backlog.

Minors remain priority calls for recent cases, but AHS may not be able to track and record every case linked to a school in the last two weeks.

AHS has an [online tool](#) to assist Albertans who test positive notify their close contacts with an automated text message.

Contact tracing in clinics

AHS will call community clinics if they identify an individual with COVID-19 who attended the clinic while infectious.

As the employer, the clinic's role is to notify staff and patients who meet the close contacts criteria; however, AHS will play a role when required.

- The AHS case investigator will contact the clinic — clinic manager or physician in charge — to complete an assessment.
- The investigator will contact each staff member if they cannot determine whether all staff were wearing appropriate PPE.
- They will not follow up individually with staff if the clinic manager or physician is sure PPE use was consistent and appropriate.

Close contacts are individuals who:

- Provided care or had close contact without consistent use of appropriate PPE
- Had direct contact with infectious bodily fluid while not wearing appropriate PPE
- Spent more than 15 minutes, cumulative, within two metres of the confirmed case without consistent use of appropriate PPE up to 48 hours before symptom onset or while the patient was symptomatic

Visitation update

Effective immediately, AHS has [limited access](#) to acute care sites to designated family and support persons.

Access for other visitors is restricted for patients at end-of-life and for those receiving critical care for a life-threatening illness.

Exceptions exist for faith and religious leaders, elders and an elder's helper, and traditional knowledge keeper or legal supports requested by the patient. These visits must be booked in advance with the service area.

Resources for designated family and support persons:

- *Know Your Risk During COVID-19* [brochure](#)
- *Know Your Role During COVID-19* [brochure](#)

Quick links

COVID Corner

On Wednesday, December 2 at 7 p.m., the University of Calgary is hosting a two-hour webinar, *COVID Corner: Hindsight 2020 – Lessons Learned and Moving Forward*, featuring Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Dr. Jim Kellner and Dr. John Conly. [Register](#).

AMA COVID-19 webinars

The Alberta Medical Association is cohosting a series of biweekly [webinars](#) on COVID-19 care for primary care, pediatric and internal medicine patients. The first session's recording about adapting to increasing needs in your practice is on their Webinars and Online Learning [page](#).

Primary care resources

AHS compiled a [quick guide](#) to 13 resources for primary care physicians to support care in the community for patients who have symptoms, have tested positive or are recovering from COVID-19.

COVID-19 stigma

AHS has a [document](#) for patients with tips and resources to understand and reduce social stigma related to COVID-19.