

From: [AHS CEO](#)
To: [AHS.All](#)
Subject: AHS COVID-19 Update: News on PPE Procurement; Changes to Swabbing Recommendations
Date: Saturday, April 11, 2020 5:59:26 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image014.png](#)
Importance: High



News on PPE Procurement; Changes to Swabbing Recommendations

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

Today's Update

- **Cases in Alberta**
- **Capacity and Personal Protective Equipment Update**
- **Changes in Specimen Collection Recommendations**
- **Message from the Wisdom Council**
- **Acts of Community Kindness**

COVID-19 Status

We have confirmed 69 new cases of COVID-19 over the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 1569. Of the total cases, 216 are suspected to be through community transmission. Currently, there are 47 cases in hospital, with 13 in ICU. The number of recovered cases is now at 744, which is 48 per cent of known infections.

Today, we must report one more death related to COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone. We want to share our sincere condolences with the loved ones of this individual, and to those impacted by the loss of every Albertan to COVID-19 to date. As healthcare professionals, and fellow Albertans, we feel these losses deeply. In total, 40 Albertans have now passed away from COVID-19.

Currently, our rates of infection and hospitalization are encouraging, in that they are substantially below the predicted rates for this period of time and appearing to be stable. This does not mean we should relax our protocols, but it gives us reason to continue what we are doing. We must adhere to the provincial healthcare restrictions in order to continue to limit the impact of this pandemic.

Things You Need to Know

Capacity and Personal Protective Equipment Update

As we heard last week from Premier Jason Kenney, AHS's and other partners' response to Alberta's COVID-19 modelling work gives us great confidence in our province's ability to meet the anticipated surge in cases of COVID-19 in the coming weeks. We have built capacity in the system by postponing elective procedures and surgeries, reducing non-essential lab and diagnostic imaging testing, discharging acute care patients as soon as they're able to return home or to the community, moving seniors who are in hospital into more appropriate care settings, where appropriate, and redeploying resources and staff to places where they will be greatly needed.

By the end of April, Alberta Health Services will have the following in place to support patients with COVID-19:

- 2,250 acute care beds,
- Nearly 1,100 ICU beds,
- Approximately 760 ventilators.

This is more than enough to meet the projected demand for hospital services during the peak of the outbreak in Alberta.

We have also had great success in securing large quantities of personal protective equipment (PPE). Alberta Health Services, as one provincial healthcare provider, has strong purchasing power. We are also so grateful for the foresight of the AHS leadership team in our procurement areas, under the direction of Jitendra Prasad, AHS Chief Program Officer, Contracting, Procurement and Supply Management, for leveraging their expertise and relationships to ensure we have what we need to keep our teams safe and protected throughout this pandemic. We are also confident in our expected needs and supplies of ventilators to support the most severely ill patients. Should the data continue to trend as it has been, we feel we are in a good position to provide the care Albertans will need, while keeping our healthcare teams safe.

In addition to supplying our hospitals and healthcare centres, we also provide PPE supplies to physician offices, continuing care sites, seniors' lodges, pharmacists, midwives, emergency shelters and EMS teams across Alberta.

The [Government of Alberta announced today](#) that PPE will be sent – including N95 and procedural masks, gloves, goggles, and ventilators – to our fellow Canadians in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia. We are able to keep Albertans safe and help other Canadian healthcare systems to take on the challenges they face in managing COVID-19.

Changes in COVID-19 specimen collection recommendations

Earlier today, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) provided updated recommendations for COVID-19 specimen collection and clarified instructions for the use of various types of swabs.

The standard practice for collecting COVID-19 samples had previously been to swab a patient's nose - either a deep nasal swab or deeper nasopharyngeal (NP) swab.

However, our provincial public health labs were finding variability in the quality of the samples coming in to the lab on the deep nasal swabs.

The lab has confirmed that a throat sample collected on the Aptima swabs we are using now is effective at detecting the virus. Going forward, swabbing the NP or the throat will now be the recommended standard, not the nose.

Instructions on proper collection techniques, and the swabs that are most appropriate for various sites are available [here](#).

The COVID-19 test we use in the APL-Public Health Provincial Lab is very sensitive in

detecting the virus. The performance of the ProvLab test equals or exceeds that of many other COVID-19 tests used in Canada and those that have received regulatory agency approval. This change is an opportunity for continuous improvement by enhancing and clarifying our specimen collection recommendations. It also provides some additional flexibility as providers can now collect a throat sample, which is easier for both provider and patient. This change will also reduce the variability in the quality of the samples coming into the lab and further reduce the chance of a false-negative.

Reducing Infection Transmission from Personal Items and Clothing

There are many questions arising from healthcare teams about the use of scrubs, personal clothing and how to clean surfaces at home after a shift, to reduce the risk of self-contamination and transmission of COVID-19 outside the healthcare environment.

PPE, including scrubs, are worn to protect clothing from contamination. By protecting yourself and using your PPE properly at work, you're also protecting your family members and loved ones. AHS-issued scrubs are supplied to areas where they are clinically necessary, for example, to staff on COVID-19 designated units, who provide direct patient care and to other areas where required by departmental policy. For more information refer to the [Healthcare Attire Information Sheet](#). Hair and shoe coverings are not required PPE. If hair coverings are worn for personal reasons; launder as per the [Healthcare Attire Information Sheet](#).

Here are some additional recommendations:

- Washable clothing is preferred in the healthcare setting. Regularly launder clothing in a hot water wash cycle followed by a cycle in the dryer. For more information refer to the [Healthcare Attire Information Sheet](#).
- Minimize contact between unprotected clothing and patient environments. For instance, do not lean up against walls, countertops, furniture, patient beds/cribs, or medical equipment.
- Change your clothes at the end of a clinical day, either at the hospital or other facility, or once you arrive at home. If you change at work, transport the clothes you have changed out of into either a disposable plastic bag or a washable cloth bag that can be laundered at the same time as the clothes.

In addition to the above IPC recommendations, [physical distancing](#) is being practiced in work spaces to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 at AHS.

AHS has a dedicated page for [PPE information](#) developed by the PPE task force, and more information about Infection Prevention and Control measures for personal items and clothing can be found [here](#).

Message from the Wisdom Council

We are thankful to our partners across the province as we collectively work with Albertans to slow the spread of COVID-19. Alberta's Indigenous communities have been collaborative and supportive in our efforts as we work together to support the unique needs of these communities. The Wisdom Council provides guidance and recommendations to ensure AHS develops and implements culturally appropriate and innovative health service delivery for Indigenous Peoples, including our work on COVID-19.

We received a very encouraging message this week, from the Wisdom Council Chair, Casey Eagle Speaker and Co-Chair, Wally Sinclair. Here are some excerpts from that message:

We must remain diligent in staying home and doing our best to continue disinfecting our surrounding regularly. We've heard hand hygiene remains the single most effective action to prevent the spread of infection remember the importance of this advice to wash your hands frequently. Be sure to exercise,

go for walks as it benefits your body, mind and spirit. Spring is a time to appreciate the beauty of Mother Nature, listen and watch the birds chirping, breath in the fresh air and give thanks we can still appreciate the beauty of re-birth of this beautiful planet we call home.

Focus on staying well spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally. We have experienced many challenges but we have and will overcome. It has been and continues to be with our way of knowing that the warrior spirit in all of us needs to stay strong. Our Ancestors stood strong and we are still here. The future is always based on hope. We will come out of this dark time with a renewed sense of hope and love for each other. We continue to pray for our Wisdom Council members, Dr. Verna Yiu, AHS executive, IHP staff and all nurses, doctors and all healthcare frontline workers. We will get through this challenge TOGETHER! Trust and have faith in your prayers we will overcome.

In the Spirit of Health and Reconciliation (Reconciliation)

-Casey and Wally

Be Well - Be Kind

Acts of Community Kindness

This weekend, many families are finding unique ways to connect with their loved ones, while practicing physical-distancing. One of the most unique we've seen so far might just be the 'Patio Party Hoedown' in one of Calgary's southwest seniors' residences.

"We know that this weekend may be a difficult one, as we would normally all be getting together to celebrate Easter with our family," said Anthony Cherniawsky, a Community Relations Director at Amica Aspen Woods. Staff assisted in facilitating the event from the ground—maintaining safe physical distance while leading a line dance.

The couple dancing on their balcony is Jan and Chris Wierenga, who celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary earlier this year.



We hope you will also find many safe, unique and fulfilling ways to celebrate over the coming days. Find joy as you connect with loved ones in virtual ways, find peace as

you take moments to enjoy some rest, find comfort as you reflect on the support of Albertans, who appreciate all you are doing to keep them safe.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Dr. Verna Yiu

AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

