

ISC-AB Vaccine Update September 14, 2021

PLEASE NOTE: This call took place prior to the provincial news conference on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at which a state of public health emergency was declared for Alberta. Additionally, new temporary public health restrictions are in effect as of September 16. Please see the Government of Alberta's [COVID-19 Info for Albertans webpage](#) and [COVID-19 Public Health Actions webpage](#) for further information. Indigenous Services Canada, Alberta Region (ISC-AB) is currently reaching out to your Nation's leadership and remains available to answer your questions and work with you as we navigate the COVID-19 response in your communities.

General Updates:

- Alberta is currently in the fourth wave and leading the country in daily new COVID-19 cases and active cases, with a seven-day average positivity rate of 11.68% as of September 13, 2021. We anticipate seeing more cases in the coming weeks.
- From August 30 – September 5, 2021, the province-wide reproduction number (R Value)¹ was 1.12 (1.10-1.14).
- The province did not anticipate the current situation, particularly the increase in hospitalizations and pressures on the health care system, based on the modelling that was used in early June (based on UK data) to inform summer and fall planning and the response to COVID-19.
 - Updated provincial modelling, as well as reviews and projections, is available at the Government of Alberta's [Cases in Alberta webpage](#).
 - Independent modelling is available at the BC COVID-19 Modelling Group's [COVID-19 Projections for Alberta's 4th Wave webpage](#).
- As of September 13, 2021, there have been 272,211 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Alberta (1,434 confirmed on September 13). Of these cases – 251,475 have recovered and 8,265 are active. There are 822 individuals in hospital (212 in ICU) and, sadly, 2,471 people in Alberta have passed away due to COVID-19.
- As of September 13, 2021, there have been 10,662 probable and confirmed on-reserve cases of COVID-19. Of these total cases – 9,729 have recovered and 835 are active cases in 43 First Nation communities. There are 26 individuals in hospital (seven in ICU) and, sadly, 97, individuals have passed away. As of September 13, 23 communities have 10 or more active cases.
- As of August 12, 2021 – 5,665,956 immunizations have been administered in Alberta, with approximately 79.2% of the population age 12 and older having received at least one dose (67.4% of the total population) and approximately 71.2% fully immunized (60.2% of the population).
- As of September 13, 2021– 74,311 immunizations have been administered in First Nation communities in Alberta, with approximately 41,110 first doses and 32,301 second doses. Approximately, 64.2% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received at least one dose and approximately 50.5% are fully immunized.
- As of August 13, 2021 (ISC-AB uses Indian Registry data for the population age 12 and older living on reserve as the denominator):

¹ The R Value describes whether cases are currently increasing, decreasing or staying the same and can estimate the average number of people that someone with COVID-19 will infect. The province updates COVID-19 R Values every two weeks.

- 12-17 year olds: Approximately 44.4% first doses, 29.9% second doses.
- 18-34 year olds: Approximately 45.9% first doses, 33.1% second doses.
- 35-49 year olds: Approximately 70.9% first doses, 56.1% second doses.
- 50-64 year olds: Approximately 94.9% first doses, 81.2% second doses.
- 65+ year olds: Approximately 100% first doses, 95.5% second doses.
- Rate of immunization by Treaty Area:
 - Treaty 6: Approximately 45.7% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose and 36.5% have received two doses.
 - Treaty 7: Approximately 84.6% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose and 66.7% have received two doses.
 - Treaty 8: Approximately 70.6% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose and 54.6% have received two doses.
- In the last nine months, the majority of vaccine activity/uptake took place between March – May 2021. Uptake has slowly decreased over the summer months, but it is encouraging to see that first doses are still being administered. Work continues to increase the number of second doses being administered.
- The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Alberta Region (FNIHB-AB) Epi team is currently looking into break through infections and developing data that will be shared soon.
- Regarding third doses:
 - The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) [report](#) on additional doses for immunocompromised individuals was released on September 10, 2021.
 - Three doses are a full vaccine series for immunocompromised individuals, while two doses is still sufficient for the general population. Current data shows that vaccine effectiveness is not as high in immunocompromised individuals as the general population, and a third dose is needed to provide sufficient coverage/increase an antibody response.
 - No adverse events have been connected with third doses at this time. NACI is currently looking into any potential impact related to myocarditis and pericarditis.
 - At this time, the province recommends three doses for eligible groups with the highest risk of severe outcomes – some immunocompromised individuals age 12 and older and residents of senior’s supportive living. Further information and a list of eligible immunocompromised conditions is available at the Government of Alberta’s [COVID-19 Vaccines and Records webpage](#).
- Regarding booster shots:
 - Booster shots differ from third doses and are administered as an additional dose of a vaccine given after the protection provided by the original shot(s) has begun to decrease over time.
 - NACI has not yet released a third dose recommendation as it’s still early in determining if a booster is necessary for the general population. Data from Israel, where booster shots are available, is incoming and continues to show effectiveness against hospitalization and severe outcomes. Additional international studies are being done regarding the different types of vaccines, what would be required for booster shots, etc.
 - Some jurisdictions, such as Quebec, are offering additional shots to travellers who received mixed doses of vaccine that are not recognized as a full series in

other countries. We do not expect an announcement on booster shots from the Government of Alberta until NACI releases their recommendations (anticipated this fall).

- Regarding pediatric doses for children under the age of 12:
 - Pfizer clinical trials are currently underway, and we expect to see the results of the 5-11 year old trial by early October. Pfizer may need time to make pediatric formulations, so we do not expect availability/rollout of these vaccines until late 2021/early 2022.
 - Moderna clinical trials are also underway, and may not need pediatric formulation. However, no timeframe has been given on when to expect Moderna's trial data.
- ISC-AB is available to work with Nations to reduce vaccine wastage.
 - School immunization campaigns have already been implemented by some communities, and is an opportunity to increase coverage.
- ISC-AB is working with Dr. James Makokis and Dr. Lana Potts on the "Power of 100" campaign to mobilize social media influencers to help disseminate positive, reputable COVID-19 vaccine information and increase vaccination rates for Indigenous youth age 12-35. If you are interested in participating in this campaign, please reach out to Dr. Parminder Thiara or Cristina Daniel, Director, Communications, ISC-AB at cristina.daniel@canada.ca.
- **Please Note:** The province will introduce a printable COVID-19 vaccination card starting on September 16, 2021. Using an Alberta driver's licence or identification card, Albertans can sign up for the vaccination card at the [MyHealth Records website](#). In addition to a printable record, the website will also let individuals download their vaccination records to show on phones, tablets, etc. It is unclear at this time if the province will move towards official vaccine passport system.
 - We ask that Nations who are entering vaccine data regularly into CHIP and IMARI continue to do so. If vaccine passports do become a requirement, this data will help validate information required for the passports. ISC-AB and Alberta Health are currently working with Nations that do not have RTI access to enter data into the provincial registry.

Vaccine Clinic Update:

- Regarding the AVI vaccine inventory system:
 - A reminder to reconcile AVI data daily, or at least several times a week (Fridays are encouraged). This data shows FNIHB-AB and AHS what communities currently have in stock and will help inform planning future vaccine allotments.
 - We acknowledge that workload can be an issue, but this will be important information moving forward.
 - Vaccine wastage is unfortunate, but please continue to immunize individuals who present at health centres/vaccine clinics, even if potential wastage is a concern (i.e. do not use entire vial/doses). Wastage forms remain available and are needed for reconciling data in AVI. However, Nations are no longer required to submit their wastage forms to FNIHB-AB.
 - Nations can now order the COVID-19 vaccine in the same manner as other vaccines rather than calling the vaccine depot or FNIHB-AB. This process should make ordering vaccines easier. Be mindful of name of vaccine when you are ordering. NACI continues to recommend using the same vaccine type for both doses.

- Regarding consent forms for congregate care sites:
 - Please ensure new, separate consent forms are obtained for a third dose, as the initial consent form was only for first and second doses.
- School clinics are currently available (includes grade 7-12 students, teachers, staff). We encourage you to reach out to schools to coordinate these clinics.
 - Parental/guardian consent, either written verbal (documented), is necessary.
 - Alberta Health is providing a specific consent form, or you can use regular immunization school forms. The forms need to indicate which dose/the type of vaccine being administered.
- We anticipate approval from Alberta Health on the co-administration of COVID-19 vaccines and other inactive vaccines – live vaccines will continue to be spaced. This potential change is not confirmed, and COVID-19 vaccines need to continue to be administered at least 14 days apart from other vaccines.
 - **Please Note:** As of September 16, 2021, this has been confirmed. Please see the AHS [COVID-19 Vaccine Biological Page](#) (page 7) for information.
- The expiry date for Pfizer vaccines labelled August 2021 – February 2022 has been extended by three months, as long as the vials have been stored between -90 – -60 degrees Celsius. Some communities may receive allotments from vaccine depots with the dates updated on the outside of the box – please keep those doses together/in the box. Please call the vaccine depot if you have any question about these boxes. Once thawed, the Pfizer vaccine is useable for 31 days.
- New TempTales (temperature monitors to ensure cold storage of vaccines) will be mailed out directly to health centres by the end of this week, so please look out for them.
- Dr. Thiara and Christina Smith will continue to send email updates on vaccine. Nurses who have not been receiving these updates, please email christina.smith@canada.ca. These emails are usually sent to Health Directors through the CDE Inbox, who can contact sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca to be added to the send outs.

Questions:

- ***Similar to the current immunization infographics that provide vaccination rate demographics (ex. age group, Treaty area, etc.), can ISC-AB provide similar breakdowns for future case numbers in the unvaccinated population?***
 - Dr. Thiara and Christina Smith will follow up with the FNIHB-AB Epi team if this is possible.
- ***Can ISC-AB tell us what type of vaccine, as well as what potential underlying co-morbidities, are most associated with breakthrough infections?***
 - This level of detail likely is not available, but the FNIHB-AB Epi team is currently collecting data on breakthrough infections. Further information may be available at the upcoming Medical Officers of Health [Telehealth](#) update on Thursday, September 16.
- ***In determining the percentage of the vaccinated population, does the province use data provided to ISC-AB from First Nation communities?***
 - ISC-AB provides the province with overall data (not specific to individual Nations), but we will need to confirm if/how this information is used in provincial reporting.

- **Regarding third doses: Can Nations offer third doses to individuals who want one and/or who not have an eligible immunocompromised condition but are still immunocompromised (ex. diabetes)? This would help prevent wastage.**
 - We must follow provincial guidelines at this time (see previously mentioned [COVID-19 Vaccines and Records webpage](#)). Additional/booster shots cannot be administered at this time as NACI and provincial recommendations are forthcoming. It is important that systematic and safety reviews occur before proceeding with booster shots for the general population (other than residents of senior's supportive living and travellers who received mixed doses), including youth age 12-17.
 - The World Health Organization (WHO) continues to recommend prioritizing first doses for adults and urges all nations not to proceed with booster shots. There is still a global shortage of COVID-19 vaccine, and only 40% of the world population has received a first dose.
 - Please continue to immunize individuals who present at health centres/vaccine clinics, even if potential wastage is a concern. This will help increase overall vaccination coverage.

- **Do individuals need to book appointments through AHS to qualify for provincial vaccine incentives?**
 - All Alberta residents 18 and older who have had two doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine, either administered on/off reserve, through AHS or a pharmacy, etc. are eligible for the remaining for the remaining provincial vaccine incentives. Information on the incentives, as well as a web link to book your vaccine, is available at the Government of Alberta's [Vaccine Incentives webpage](#).

Thank you all for your continued hard work and dedication. We will meet again **September 28, 2021 at 1PM.**