

ISC-AB Vaccine Update January 18, 2022

General Updates:

- In recent weeks, there has been an increase in active cases in First Nations communities due to the B.1.1.529 (Omicron) variant. Over 90% of provincial lab swabs are coming back positive for the Omicron variant. There has also been an increase in hospitalizations and ICU admittance across the province.
- As of January 17, there are approximately 72,368 active cases in Alberta; 1,007 individuals are in hospital (91 in ICU). As there may be more cases identified through take-home rapid antigen tests as well as unconfirmed/asymptomatic cases, the actual case count in the province is likely much higher.
- As of January 17, there have been 15,994 probable and confirmed on-reserve cases of COVID-19. Of these total cases – 14,624 have recovered and 1,219 are active cases in 38 First Nation communities; 23 communities have 10 or more active cases. There are 21 individuals in hospital (8 in ICU) and, sadly, 149, individuals have passed away.
- As of January 16 – 8,071,666 immunizations have been administered in Alberta, with approximately 89.8% of the population age 12 and older having received at least one dose (80.1% of the total population) and approximately 85.8% having received two doses (73.5% of the total population).
- As mentioned at previous vaccine updates, ISC-AB uses Indian Registry data for the population age 12 and older living on reserve as the denominator. The numerator consists of all the doses administered on reserve and doses reconciled through the provincial registry using RTI. The doses administered on reserve would also include individuals not residing on reserve, etc.
- As of January 16 – 112,034 immunizations have been administered in First Nation communities in Alberta, with approximately 57,529 first doses, 46,247 second doses, and 8,258 third doses. Approximately, 86.5% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received at least one dose (71.9% of the total population), 72.1% have received at least two doses (57.8% of the total population), and 12.9% have received three doses (10.3% of the total population).
- As of January 16:
 - 5-11 year olds: Approximately 20.6% first doses, 2.1% second doses.
 - 12-17 year olds: Approximately 73.6% first doses, 56.9% second doses, 0.4% third doses.
 - 18-34 year olds: Approximately 68.3% first doses, 53.4% second doses, 4.9% third doses.
 - 35-49 year olds: Approximately 96.6% first doses, 81.2% second doses, 13.6% third doses.
 - 50-64 year olds: Approximately 100% first doses, 89.6% second doses, 24.6% third doses.
 - 65+ year olds: Approximately 100% first doses, 94.2% second doses, 45.6% third doses.
 - Rate of immunization by Treaty Area:
 - Treaty 6: Approximately 69.1% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose, 57.4% have received two doses, and 9.4% have received three doses.

- Treaty 7: Approximately 100% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose, 86.7% have received two doses, and 19.6% have received three doses.
 - Treaty 8: Approximately 96.2% of the population age 12 and older living on reserve have received one dose, 77.1% have received two doses, and 11.1% have received three doses.
- In the breakdown of doses administered per week:
 - Spring 2021 saw a high number of first and second doses administered.
 - Fall 2021 saw an increase in second and third doses being administered.
 - Currently, the majority of vaccines being administered are first and third doses, There has also been an increase in first doses in children age 5-11 years old in the last two weeks.
- Jurisdictions, including Alberta, are currently monitoring outcomes from third doses to assess the effectiveness/longevity of booster doses.
- A recent study from Public Health Ontario gained attention for stating that three vaccine doses are not effective against the Omicron variant. However, this goes against evidence seen in other jurisdictions (ex. the UK), and the authors of the study have acknowledged issues with methodology (the study has not been peer reviewed) and have said that they will reassess the analysis.
- Immunocompromised Albertans age 12 and older are eligible for third doses. Eligible immunocompromising conditions are listed at the Government of Alberta [COVID-19 Vaccines and Records webpage](#).
- Regarding clinical vaccine trials:
 - Pediatric COVID-19 vaccines for children age 4 years old and under are still underway as an appropriate dosage is determined. A date for study results has not been provided.
 - Moderna is currently working on an Omicron-specific booster vaccine, which may have the option of being combined with influenza vaccine. More information is expected by March 2022.
- There is a limited supply of the adult Pfizer vaccine in Alberta at this time, and more is expected to arrive in the province in the next two weeks. There should not be any shortages when ordering from vaccine depots, but please reach out to Dr. Parminder Thiara, Christina Smith, and/or Brent Whittal if you encounter any supply issues. Adult Pfizer vaccines should be prioritized for adults 18-29 years of age.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) recently made recommendations on prioritizing Paxlovid (Pfizer's oral COVID-19 pill) until it becomes widely available in Canada. PHAC recommends prioritizing severely immune-compromised patients, people 80+ years old who don't have all their vaccines, people over 60+ years old living in remote and rural locations, long-term care homes, and First Nations communities. Further recommendations from Alberta and information are expected soon.
- As part of the recent changes to the provincial COVID-19 response, provincial laboratories will be prioritizing and reserving PCR tests for COVID-19 from certain high risk settings such as acute care and continuing care as well as for those eligible for monoclonal antibody treatment (ex. Sotrovimab). PCR testing still available in community, but results may be delayed.
- Scheduling immunization clinics, providing communities with reliable information, and emphasizing the importance of vaccines remains a priority for ISC-AB. Please reach out

to ISC-AB to discuss surge supports, updates to the provincial COVID-19 response/change management process, and any other challenges or questions you may have.

Vaccine Clinic Update:

- [AHS COVID-19 Moderna, Pfizer, and AstraZeneca Vaccine Biological Pages](#) – last updated December 21, 2021.
- [Management of COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Errors and Deviations](#) – last updated December 16, 2021.
- [Public Health Disease Management Guidelines: Coronavirus – COVID-19](#) – last updated November 2021 (update expected soon).
- ISC-AB has not seen any recurring issues and community staff seem to be managing well with current guidelines and schedules.
- Very few vaccine adverse events require Alberta Health reporting, which suggests vaccines and third doses are being well tolerated.

Questions:

- ***Are there any updates on the Delta variant? Is it still prominent in Alberta?***
 - Over 90% of provincial lab swabs are coming back positive for the Omicron variant.
 - Not all test swabs are screened for variants. Point of care swabs from First Nations are being screened, as are tests from hospitalized individuals.
 - The Delta variant is still present in Alberta, but to a much lesser extent. There are some cases in small pockets of the North and Central Zones where spread may be possible.
- ***Are prefilled single dose syringes being developed/made available?***
 - Prefilled single dose syringes may be developed, but it isn't expected anytime soon. Manufacturers are still responding to the global need for vaccines (ex. as many doses as possible).
- ***When will more take-home rapid antigen tests be available?***
 - The province has indicated that there have been some supply chain issues, and ISC-AB is working closely with Alberta Health to bridge any potential gaps until more tests arrive. The province will reach out to ISC-AB to update us on their capacity.
 - The province has allocated take-home rapid antigen tests for all First Nations communities in Alberta. Please contact the province if your Nation has not received its supply (approximately 20% of the allocations have been distributed to date).
- ***If a youth 12-17 years of age year old received Moderna as their first dose, can they receive Pfizer as a second dose?***
 - As discussed at previous updates, a small number of cases of myocarditis and/or pericarditis following immunization with mRNA vaccines have been reported in

Canada and internationally(at a slightly higher rate for Moderna). This is a rare outcome and in most reported cases the issue resolves on its own or with symptomatic therapy within days.

- In Alberta, Pfizer and Moderna are considered interchangeable and Pfizer is prioritized for individuals 12-29 years of age regardless of first dose. The administrator of the vaccine should discuss potential risks and provincial guidance with the individual.

Thank you all for your continued hard work and dedication. We will meet again **February 1, 2022 at 1PM.**