

ISC-AB Weekly Vaccine Update May 4, 2021

General Updates:

- As of May 3, 2021 there are 7,898 total on reserve cases of COVID-19 in Alberta. Of these 7,898 total cases – 7,493 have recovered, 327 are active in 40 First Nation communities. There are 24 hospitalizations and 78 individuals have sadly passed away to date. Active case numbers have mainly stabilized.
- Alberta has the highest case rate in North America and is at the highest level of the pandemic. The variants of concern are now present in approximately 63% of all confirmed active COVID-19 cases in Alberta and has been identified in approximately 33 First Nations communities. A total of 371 cases of the B.1.1.7 VOC have been identified on-reserve to date. ISC-AB continues to monitor any additional variants, including the P.1 (Brazilian) and the B.1.351 (South African) variant, but over 99% of all variant cases in Alberta are B.1.1.7.

Vaccine General Update:

- The high number of cases highlights the need to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible and follow public health measures.
- As of May 4, 2021 -approx 30% of the over 18 population in Alberta have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This is slightly lower than the national average. Over 33,000 immunizations have been administered in Alberta First Nations, 23,000 first doses and 10,300 second doses. About 42% of everyone over 18 living on-reserve have received at least one dose and ~approx 19% have been fully vaccinated. There have been 398 refusals and 190 doses wasted. The wastage numbers are very low, less than 0.5% and much lower than previous vaccination campaigns.
- As mentioned last week, Johnson and Johnson doses expected to arrive in Canada are now on hold pending further review. ISC-AB is awaiting further information on when the vaccine will arrive in Alberta, but this will not impact First Nations which will continue to receive only Moderna for 18 plus and Pfizer for the pediatric population
- NACI released a statement on the Johnson and Johnson vaccine on May 4, recommending it be provided for those age 30+. Similar to AstraZeneca, this is a risk based decision making process. The benefits of these vaccines still outweigh the risk of contracting COVID-19.
- 2 million doses of Pfizer expected weekly in Canada and Moderna vaccine shipments are expected to be more regular. As you run your clinics, please offer vaccines on a schedule that ensures doses are used on time and on a regular schedule. If you have extra vaccines or not enough, please contact ISC-AB and doses can be shared with other communities. Supply is not a problem at the moment and more doses can be provided if needed.
- Early estimates are that the general population will be vaccinated by the end of June, but this may be completed even quicker.
- There are many questions about vaccine side effects and the OKAKI active surveillance questionnaire that was developed can help with this. OKAKI is still working to set this up in CHIP and a pilot of the project will be underway soon. If there are any Nations interested in this pilot program, ISC-AB can facilitate this with OKAKI.

- Please continue to ensure you reach out if surge supports are needed. As cases rise and front line staff are working very hard, it is important we continue to ensure clinics can run and get as many people as possible vaccinated.
- Mini clinics, part of a national program to support vaccine clinics, are still available. These mini clinics include all the resources and materials that would be needed to run a vaccine clinic. While most communities are well underway with vaccinations, if you need further resources please contact Cynthia Onyegbula at cynthia.onyegbula@canada.ca.

Vaccine Clinic Update

- Please reach out if any extra doses of Moderna are needed. AVI is checked to see how much remains at the health centre prior to ordering, please ensure AVI is kept up to date.
- Pfizer vaccine for persons are aged 12 – 17 years of ages who have chronic conditions are available to order through your vaccine depot. This is a number that you submitted already. Reminder, the vials expire in five days once removed from the vaccine freezer. AHS can hold doses of the Pfizer vaccine until communities are ready to use them.
- **Please note, after the meeting on May 4, 2021, Alberta Health Services has now opened vaccine eligibility to all Albertans aged 30 and over starting May 5, 2021 and all Albertans aged 12 and over beginning on May 10, 2021. ISC-AB is now finalizing Pfizer numbers to vaccinate all 12 – 17 year olds in First Nations. ISC-AB will work with you on next steps.**
- As this vaccine becomes more available, ISC-AB will continue to work with communities to determine the best ways to rollout vaccine for children. Schools may be an option but many schools are closed so other strategies may be needed.

Questions:

- ***Has there been any update about the ability to mix vaccines between 1st and second doses?***
 - Clinical trials on the potential for mixing vaccines for the first and second doses, including mixing mRNA and viral vector vaccines, continue in the UK. Results of these trials are anticipated by June 2021. At this time, mixing vaccines is not recommended and First Nations will continue to receive only the Moderna vaccine for 18+ and Pfizer for 12-17 year olds.
- ***Have any studies been concluded on Pfizer and the youngest pediatric population?***
 - Clinical trials are underway as well for the 6 month to 11 year old age group and results are anticipated to be released this summer.
- ***If there are any changes to Pfizer orders, how can we change the order or cancel if needs change and avoid wastage at upcoming clinics?***
 - Alberta Health Services will provide doses of Pfizer when the exact numbers needed in communities are confirmed. Pfizer doses will then be provided via vaccine depots. If there are any changes to orders, you can contact the vaccine depot to ensure you only receive the doses you need.
- ***Some members are being told they do not need two doses of the vaccine if they have previously had COVID-19?***
 - This messaging is incorrect, all Albertans should receive both doses of the vaccine for the highest levels of immunity whether they have had COVID-19 previously or not. Individuals who have an active case of COVID-19 should not receive the vaccine

until they recovered, and second doses should be administered after 21 days. If there are any issues with messaging from AHS please report it to ISC-AB.

- ***Community members are becoming more concerned with their delayed second dose of the vaccine, does the recommendation from NACI still hold up that we delay until up to 4 months?***
 - 4 months is the maximum interval between first and second doses but, if there is enough supply, there will be no need to wait the full 4 months between doses. As more individuals in your community receive a first dose, you can start providing second doses when there are opportunities to do so. Vaccine supply is expected to not be an issue in the coming weeks.
- ***What can we do to protect vaccines in the interim while we wait for the TempArmour fridges?***
 - As a first step, please contact the TempArmour company to determine when your fridge will be available. In the interim, funding for a generator may be available through health needs funding streams. Please contact ISC-AB and we can support strategies to ensure vaccines are not wasted in the case of power outages.
- ***What can we do to ensure we get a higher number of people coming to clinics as we are seeing a slow down now?***
 - Many communities are reporting that there has been a slow down. ISC-AB continues to produce education and messaging to combat vaccine hesitancy. If your community has any specific materials, please share them as well. As vaccine supply increases, you will also be able to move on to other eligible age groups and provide second doses. Another strategy may be to share more data on adverse events, which have been very rare to date, and also connect people with their primary care provider to discuss the vaccine.
- ***Do 12 – 15 year olds require a doctors note still? What kind of consent is needed?***
 - Originally, a doctor's note was going to be a requirement for this age group to receive the vaccine. This is no longer needed. As with other vaccines, nurses will need to work with parents and the children to provide informed consent. Verbal consent is all that will be required.

Thank you all for your continued hard work and dedication. We will meet again next week, **May 11, 2021 at 1:00pm.**