

# ISC Alberta Region Update for Chiefs

August 12, 2022

## COVID Information

### Minister Hajdu - August 5th Monthly Update on COVID-19

Minister Hajdu provided an update on COVID-19 in Indigenous communities on August 5. Click [here](#) to read more.

Case numbers are increasing with the current seventh wave, and it is impacting communities across the country. Indigenous Services Canada remains available to assist in prevention and response efforts. Funds are available through the Indigenous Community Support Fund (ICSF) and can be used for measures including but not limited to:

- preparedness measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- mental health assistance and emergency response services
- support for Elders and vulnerable community members
- measures to address food insecurity, such as support for the purchase, transportation and distribution of food and access to traditional foods through hunting and fishing in the event of outbreaks
- educational and other supports for children

Funds are currently being distributed in direct allocations, as well as through the needs-based request process, which remains open.

### Second booster doses available to all Albertans 18+

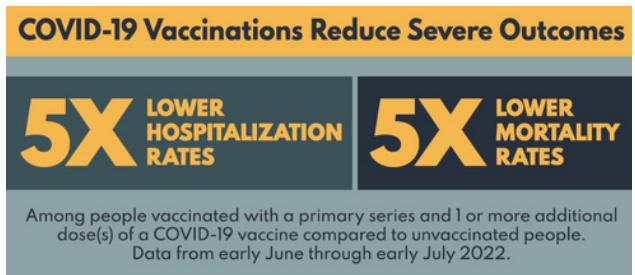
As of July 20th, Albertans 18 years of age and older are eligible to book appointments for a second booster dose of mRNA vaccine provided five months or more have passed since receiving their first booster dose and they haven't experienced a COVID-19 infection in the last 3 months. The Omicron BA.5 variant is the most common strain in Alberta right now. Data suggests that this variant is more transmissible but does not indicate an increased risk of severe outcomes. However, it is still a concern for at-risk Albertans. Expanding the availability of second COVID-19 booster doses will give at-risk Albertans, particularly those over the age of 50 and those living in seniors and congregate care settings, more choices about increasing their protection during this period of increased community transmission. To learn more, click [here](#). To read Dr. Hinshaw's statement on choosing a second booster, click [here](#).

### Vaccine for children under 5

As of August 2, children between 6 months to 5 years of age in Alberta are eligible to book appointments for their primary vaccination series to protect against COVID-19 infection. It is recommended that children aged six months to 11 years receive a primary series of two doses with an interval of at least eight weeks between the first and second dose, or a primary series of three doses if they are **moderately to severely immunocompromised** with an interval of four to eight weeks between each dose.

Please reach out to your local health centre or nursing station to book an appointment. Off-reserve, AHS will also administer vaccines for children of all ages. Pharmacies do not administer vaccinations to children under the age of five years. For AHS bookings for children under 5 years of age, first-dose appointments must be booked through the Alberta Vaccine Booking System at [bookvaccine.alberta.ca](https://bookvaccine.alberta.ca) or by calling Health Link at 811.

The First Nations Telehealth Network held a webinar to review the Moderna vaccine for children 6 months to 5 years of age on August 2nd. A recording of the session can be found [here](#).



# COVID and Health Information continued

## Rapid tests available from Alberta Health

Alberta Health is continuing to offer COVID-19 rapid tests to communities.

To make a request, please email Alberta Health at [rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca](mailto:rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca) with the number of tests required. Orders will be processed and shipped as they are received. Reporting on usage to Alberta Health is not required.

Even if they aren't needed right away, communities can still request rapid tests from Alberta Health at [rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca](mailto:rapidtesting@gov.ab.ca) at a later time and rapid tests also remain available via pharmacies for at-home testing.

## Monkeypox vaccine eligibility expanded in Alberta

As of July 28, Albertans 18 and older who self-identify as meeting the eligibility criteria for targeted prevention prior to an exposure have been able to get the monkeypox vaccine. The expanded eligibility criteria includes:

- Transgender, cisgender or two-spirit individuals who self-identify as belonging to the gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) community and who meet at least one of the following criteria:
  - Have received a recent (in the last six months) diagnosis of a sexually transmitted infection.
  - Are planning to have, or in the past 90 days had, sex outside of a mutually monogamous relationship.
  - Have attended venues for sexual contact within the past 90 days (e.g., bath houses, sex clubs) or may be planning to, or who work/volunteer in these settings.
- Any sexual contacts of the individuals described above.
- Staff and volunteers in a social setting or venue or event where sexual activities between men (individuals described above) may take place.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

**Monkeypox** is a rare disease that is caused by infection with the Monkeypox virus. The virus is related to the smallpox virus, but typically causes less serious symptoms.

Starting in May 2022, monkeypox cases are being identified in countries where it is not typically found.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has now confirmed cases in Canada, including Alberta, where there are currently **19** confirmed cases, but the risk to the general public is considered low.

- For information on the number of cases in Alberta, as well as other jurisdictions in Canada, please visit: [Monkeypox: Outbreak update - Canada.ca](#)
- To see the latest information from the Province of Alberta on Monkeypox, including symptoms, prevention and treatment, please visit: [Monkeypox virus | Alberta.ca](#)

## Links and Resources

**Recording** of June 9, 2022 COVID-19 MOH Update Telehealth Session – Click [here](#)

### Recovering from COVID-19 Resources

- [Poster - If You Have Had COVID-19: Long COVID](#)
- [Long COVID FAQs for Patients](#)
- [Getting Healthy After COVID-19](#)

### Wastewater Monitoring

If you would like to observe current trends in wastewater data, please click [here](#). To view wastewater data from the University of Calgary, click [here](#).

### Communication resources for community health and safety – Digital toolkit

For ease of use, the vaccine toolkit is now available on a web page called:

[Communication resources for community health and safety.](#)

## Question of the Day

I've heard that anthrax has been confirmed in 59 deceased wood bison living in Wood Buffalo National Park. What do I need to know? [Anthrax outbreak confirmed in Wood Buffalo National Park | CBC News](#)

**A:** Parks Canada is monitoring a confirmed anthrax outbreak in bison in Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta. As a precautionary measure, an area closure is currently in place for the Sweetgrass, Trident Creek/Meadows, and Peace Point West Junction areas. Parks Canada is advising the public to avoid contact with dead animals they come across in Wood Buffalo National Park. Individuals should leave the area immediately and report the location of the dead animal to the Wood Buffalo National Park Duty Officer at 867-872-0404. The risk to the public is considered very low. Updates and more information on this outbreak can be found [here](#).

### What is Anthrax?

- Anthrax is an infectious disease caused by a bacteria called *Bacillus anthracis*.
- The spores of this bacteria are found in the soil. The inactive spores can survive in the soil for many years.
- Most animals can be affected by anthrax, but it mainly affects herbivores. Most recent outbreaks in Alberta have affected beef cattle and bison. When herbivores are infected they die very rapidly, often within hours.
- Anthrax spores can infect animals who eat plants growing in spore-contaminated soil, or through drinking spore-contaminated water. Animals may also be infected by breathing in spores from disturbed soil (ex. kicking up dust).
- Humans can be infected with anthrax, although it is very rare. Infection in humans can happen after breathing in spores or direct entry of spores through wounds in skin when handling infected animal products (hides) or meat. The illness does not spread from person to person. Further information on human infection can be found [here](#).
- Individuals who may have been exposed to anthrax through contact with an infected animal should contact their local health centre, nursing station or doctor immediately.

Further information on anthrax in Alberta can be found in the following resources:

- [Anthrax Fact Sheet](#)
- [Alberta Anthrax Overview](#)

## MoH Rx

### Routine Childhood Immunizations

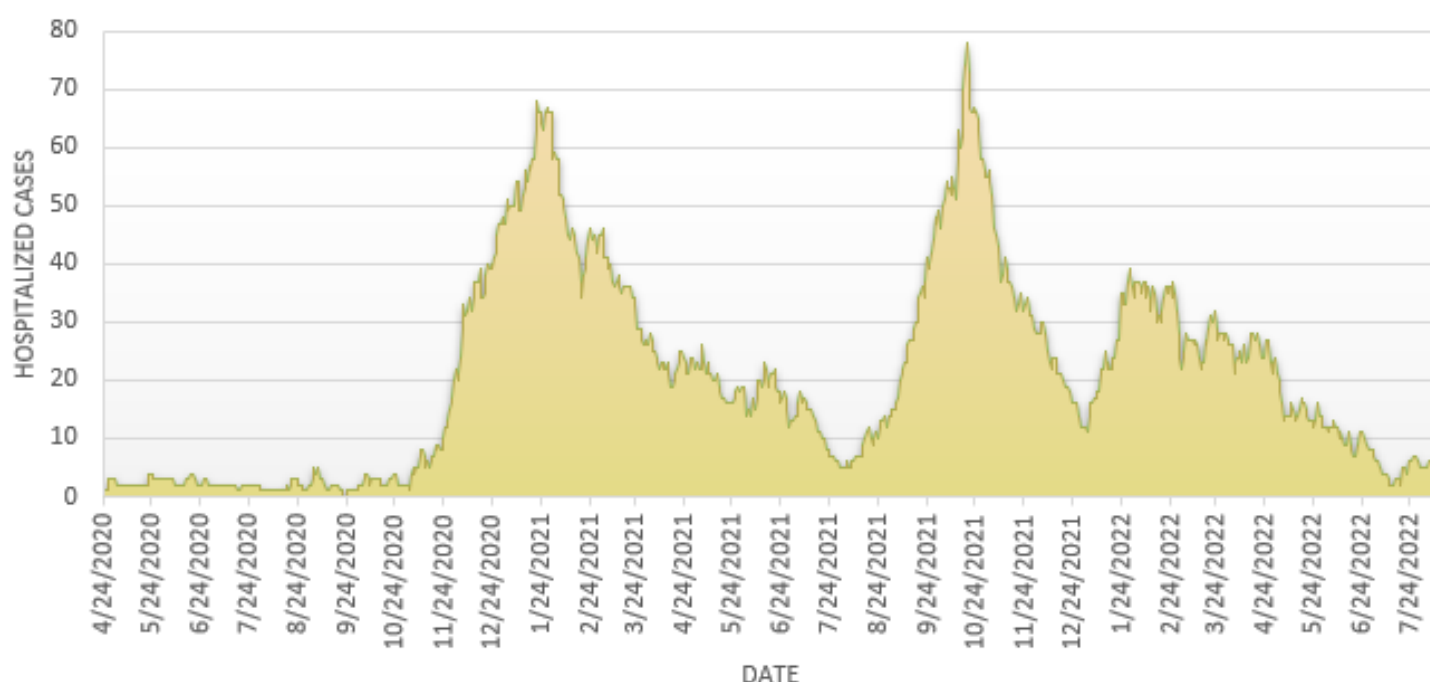
Routine immunizations for children and youth help protect them against dangerous infections such as whooping cough, measles, hepatitis B, and human papilloma virus (HPV). The COVID-19 pandemic impacted routine immunization for many First Nations children and youth in Alberta. Some children may have missed or received late immunizations and catching up is important to have the best protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Parents and pregnant individuals can find Information on Alberta's immunization program here [AHS Immunization | Immunization \(immunizealberta.ca\)](#). General immunization information for Indigenous families is also available here [Don't wait vaccinate: a guide to immunization for First Nations and Inuit parents and caregivers \(sac-isc.gc.ca\)](#).

Please contact your health centre to book an appointment for routine immunizations for a child or youth. The COVID-19 immunization is not usually given to children at the same time as routine immunizations so please be aware that separate appointments may be needed for COVID-19 and routine immunizations.

# COVID-19 Epidemiological Data

Number of Current COVID-19 Cases from First Nations Communities in Hospital



Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in First Nations Communities in Alberta, August 10, 2022

Treaty Area	Total Cases	Hospitalizations Ever (includes incidental hospitalizations)	ICU* (includes incidental ICU admissions)	Currently in Hospital (includes incidental hospitalization)	Deaths
Total (First Nations Communities)	20,503	1,062	251	4	177
Treaty 6	9,216	431	97	1	70
Treaty 7	5,841	343	91	2	64
Treaty 8	5,446	288	63	1	43
Alberta^	597,891	28,619	4,205	748	4,694

\*Each ICU admission is also included in the total number of hospitalizations

^Data are up-to-date as of end of day August 08, 2022

## VACCINE SNAPSHOT



**125,381** doses of vaccine have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta.



At least **55%** of First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on-reserve or crown land have received **three doses** of the vaccine.



At least **9.5%** of First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on-reserve or crown land have received **four doses** of the vaccine.



At least **19.9%** of First Nations people 12+ living on-reserve or crown land have received **three doses** of the vaccine.



At least **88.9%** of First Nations people 12+ living on-reserve or crown land have received their **first dose** of the vaccine.

# Additional Updates

## Government of Canada

### Statistics Canada – Reminder to those who were invited to participate

**The 2022 Indigenous Peoples Survey (IPS) is now underway.**

A national survey of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit, the 2022 IPS represents the sixth cycle of the survey and focuses on social and economic outcomes related to education, employment, health and access to services. It will continue to collect important information concerning Indigenous people such as language, harvesting, handcrafting and cultural activities, housing and mobility. It is a valuable source of information for a variety of stakeholders, including Indigenous organizations, communities, service providers, researchers, governments, and the general public. It aims to provide current and relevant data to help plan programs and policies in education, employment and health.

The survey is carried out by Statistics Canada with funding provided by three federal departments: Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, and Employment and Social Development Canada.

Individuals are invited to participate by way of a letter from Statistics Canada. If you have received an invitation to participate, please consider doing so. Click [here](#) to learn more.

## Government of Alberta

### Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit

The Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit provides a subsidy for low-income working households or those between jobs. Support is available for up to two years to help tenants afford their rent while they stabilize or improve their situation.

The benefit is provided on a first-come, first-served basis and is paid directly to eligible tenants. The benefit amount is determined by household size and location, and is a minimum of \$100 per month.

Households may be eligible if they are below the local income thresholds, are currently employed or have been employed in the last 24 months and are not receiving social assistance.

Albertans can learn more or check if they qualify online at [alberta.ca/RentAssistance](https://alberta.ca/RentAssistance).

## Calgary Learning Opportunity

### Digital Marketing & Communications for Indigenous People

The Digital Dreamers (Pa' pai tapiiksi) Training Program will be offered in September 2022. This program was created in partnership with SAIT and guided by Indigenous professionals, Traditional Elders, and Knowledge Keepers. It combines Indigenous values and culture with the latest digital tools and in-depth training, building in-demand skills for this fast-growing industry. The Digital Dreamers (Pa' pai tapiiksi) Training Program is a 26-week (6 months) full-time, integrated training program that includes in-class learning, applied skills training at SAIT and hands-on work experience with an employer host. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Program start date: September 19th, 2022 – registration is open.