

ISC - Alberta Region COVID-19 Update for Chiefs: December 22nd, 2021



Omicron variant – surge in cases

Omicron (B.1.1.529), the most transmissible variant of COVID-19 virus seen to date, has quickly become the dominant strain in Alberta. This is comparable to the rapid rise of omicron cases seen across Canada and the world. While initial data demonstrate that Omicron is more transmissible than previous variants, the severity of disease caused by this virus is still being understood. Milder disease impacting a greater number of people may still result in stretching the public health and acute care systems beyond capacity.

Additionally, the rate of reinfections seen with Omicron is 3 to 8 times higher than Delta. Household transmission rates are also higher compared to the Delta variant. A higher percentage of breakthrough infections are seen with the Omicron variant as it's believed that the variant is better able to evade the immune system. Two doses of vaccine is effective at reducing severe outcomes (hospitalizations; deaths) while 3 doses shows good protection at preventing symptomatic infection.

How do we protect ourselves and our communities from the Omicron variant?

- **Get fully vaccinated; Get a booster shot:** Vaccination, in combination with public health and individual protective measures, offer the best and most robust protection against serious illness due to COVID-19. A booster shot, following 2 doses of vaccine, is offering the best protection from severe illness from the Omicron Variant and all individuals 18 plus in Alberta are urged to get their booster as soon as possible, providing that it has been 5 months since their second shot. Children ages 5-11 are also eligible for vaccination.
- **Isolate immediately should you show any cold or flu symptoms**
- **Protective measures including physical distancing, good hand hygiene and proper mask use:** When to wear one, how to wear one, what type to choose and proper sizing – click [here](#) to view the Public Health Agency of Canada's recommendations.
- **Limit all social contacts and non-essential travel: Unfortunately, please consider cancelling or postponing holiday gatherings.**

Question of the Day

Q: How effective are the COVID Vaccines against the Omicron Variant?

A: We know that the COVID-19 vaccines are preventing severe symptoms, but breakthrough infections are occurring. Initial Data from South Africa and the UK demonstrates that after 2 doses of Pfizer, vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic infection is about 30-40% and vaccine effectiveness for severe outcomes at about 70%. A third dose of vaccine increased the effectiveness against symptomatic infection to about 70-80%. Data from additional studies will help refine our understanding of the vaccine effectiveness against severe outcomes from Omicron. Regardless, vaccination offers the best and most robust protection from COVID-19

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New public health measures

The Government of Alberta has announced **new mandatory public health measures taking effect at 12:01 a.m. on Dec. 24** which include:

- For venues in the Restrictions Exemption Program – 50 per cent capacity limit at venues that seat more than 1,000 people. For venues with capacity of between 500 and 1,000 occupants, 500 is the limit.
- No food or drink consumption in seated audience settings or during intermissions in the above-mentioned venues.
- There is no impact on venues under 500.
- Maximum table capacity of 10 people in restaurants, pubs and bars. No mingling between tables.
- No interactive activities at restaurants, pubs and bars (e.g., dancing, darts and billiards).
- Restaurants, pubs and bars must stop liquor service at 11 p.m., and close at 12:30 a.m.
- Restrictions continue for both indoor and outdoor social gatherings, weddings, funerals, places of worship and businesses. Albertans should also refrain from workplace social gatherings.

Masking remains mandatory in all indoor public spaces, including in facilities participating in the Restrictions Exemption Program. Masks should fit well and be of high quality. Albertans with risk factors for severe outcomes should wear medical masks in settings with those outside of their household. To learn more, click [here](#).

REMINDER: Rapid Testing kits

Rapid testing kits from the Government of Alberta are still available. If you would be interested in receiving a supply of rapid tests for distribution to your members, please contact Erin O'Neill, Operations and Logistics Section Chief in the Emergency Operations Centre. Erin can be reached at Erin.Oneill@gov.ab.ca. Remember, rapid tests are one tool in a set of tools, and they should be used in tandem with all other health precautions, not as a replacement for public health measures. A single negative test does not guarantee that a person is COVID-free.

Navigating the Holidays Safely

The decisions we make for ourselves and our families can make an impact on Omicron transmission. Take extra precautions when you can.

- With respect to [provincial guidelines](#), the provincial government is asking Albertans to look at their plans and **reduce their in-person interactions and contacts by 50%**
- Encourage guests to wear medical masks, except for when they are eating and drinking. Talk about everyone's comfort level in advance with respect to vaccination and preventative measures. Have a virtual option for any gatherings you are hosting, to keep in-person numbers low or even consider gathering outside.
- Open a window or door for a short time every 15 -20 minutes to ensure ventilation, even if it is cold outside.
- ***Stay home or cancel gatherings if you feel unwell.**

Click [here](#) for additional tips from Dr. Deena Hinshaw.

Alberta Cases: as of Dec 21st, 3:30 p.m. MST

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|---|----------------|
| AB Total Confirmed (Dec 20th–786 new cases) | 343,734 |
| AB Recovered Cases | 334,395 |
| Confirmed First Nations On-reserve Cases | 14,425 |
| On-reserve Recovered Cases | 14,170 |
| On-Reserve Active Cases | 106 |
| Calgary Zone Confirmed | 127,880 |
| Central Zone Confirmed | 38,860 |
| Edmonton Zone Confirmed | 106,413 |
| North Zone Confirmed | 46,986 |
| South Zone Confirmed | 23,548 |
| Unknown Confirmed | 47 |
| Deaths due to COVID-19 | 3,294 |
| On-reserve Deaths due to COVID-19 | 148 |
| Omicron Variant Confirmed in Alberta | 1,609 |

Travel Considerations

In response to the emergence of the Omicron variant and its rapid spread, the federal government is advising Canadians to avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada. The Omicron landscape is evolving rapidly, both within Canada and abroad, and information pertaining to travel is subject to change which may occur suddenly and without warning. Click [here](#) for the most current information.

Regional Snapshot



More Alberta case data can be found [here](#)

Useful Links

Telehealth Session: Sotrovimab Therapy for COVID-19: December 16th: Click [here](#) for a recording of the session

Medical Officer of Health – Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: December 16, 2021: Click [here](#)

Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada: Click [here](#) for the December 10th update on Omicron

Cold Lake Chief Uses his Experience to Encourage Others to Get Vaccinated: click [here](#)

Vaccine Update



Dr. Theresa Tam – Importance of Vaccination

Omicron's rapid spread in Canada and globally is concerning and underscores the need to remain vigilant, particularly as we head into the holiday season. Evidence continues to demonstrate that a complete two-dose series of [Health-Canada approved COVID-19 vaccines](#) will provide [substantial protection](#) against severe illness. **Among youth and adults aged 12 to 59 years**, unvaccinated people were **31 times more likely** to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than fully vaccinated people. **Among older adults aged 60 years or older**, unvaccinated people were **15 times more likely** to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than fully vaccinated people. Click [here](#) to read the statement.

Telehealth Update – January 13th

The next MOH Telehealth update will be on January 13th, with Dr. Chris Sarin, Dr. Parminder Thiara and special guest Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health. Please register for the session at <http://www.fntn.ca>.

Updates to the ISC COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit

You can access this new version [here](#). It includes:

- Vaccine-related resources
- Resources for kids
- Information on the “[My Vaxx Journey](#)” campaign

Many of the updates are geared towards youth and young adults. Below are specific resources of particular interest to that audience:

- Pre-recorded radio PSAs on mental health:
- [recorded by James Jones \(Notorious Cree\) \(EN\)](#)
- [recorded by rapper Samian \(FR\)](#)
- Partnership with the Assembly of Seven Generations [@covid_communitycare](#)

You can re-watch their webinar here: [Debunking Covid-19 Vaccine Myths – YouTube](#)

Useful links:

- **Video PSA from G4 Health featuring Dr. Chris Sarin and puppets** – Click [here](#)
- **Wondering if vaccines are safe?** Watch this [video](#).

Vaccine Snapshot

*as of December 21st



108,324 doses of vaccine have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta.



At least **85.5%** of First Nations people 12+ living on-reserve or crown land have received their **first dose**.



At least **71%** of First Nations people 12+ living on-reserve or crown land have received **two doses of the vaccine**.



At least **10.4%** of First Nations people living on-reserve or crown land have received **three doses of the vaccine**.