

ISC - Alberta Region COVID-19 Update for Chiefs: August 4th, 2021



Changes to Management of COVID-19 in Alberta:

Following up from the letter sent to you last Thursday, Alberta is transitioning the approach to COVID-19. The initial changes on July 29, 2021 include lifting of the legal quarantine requirement for contacts of COVID-19. The provincial testing approach will change over the next several weeks from widespread testing to more targeted testing by the province for those most at risk for severe outcomes of COVID-19. Alberta is able to make these changes to the COVID-19 approach because of the strong vaccine uptake province wide. **The following changes are in place now:**

- Quarantine for close contacts will shift from mandatory to recommended. Isolation for anyone with COVID-19 symptoms and for confirmed positive cases is still required.
- Unimmunized individuals who know they have been exposed to COVID-19 should monitor for symptoms and seek testing if they become symptomatic.
- Anyone who is not fully immunized should avoid high-risk locations such as continuing care facilities and crowded indoor spaces if they have been in contact with a case in the past 14 days.
- All positive cases will continue to be notified. AHS contact tracers will no longer notify close contacts of exposure. Individuals will be asked to inform their close contacts when informed of their positive result. FNIHB supports health centers that want to offer assistance to cases to identify and notify their contacts.
- Outbreak management and identification will focus on high-risk locations, including continuing and acute care facilities and high-risk workplaces. Community outbreaks with a surge in cases leading to severe outcomes will also be addressed as needed.
- Testing is available for symptomatic individuals. While asymptomatic testing is no longer recommended off reserve, FNIHB MOHs are supportive of communities who wish to offer asymptomatic testing to close contacts or individuals possibly exposed to COVID-19 (eg. recent travel) that are not fully immunized. Asymptomatic individuals who are fully immunized should not be tested.
- Mandatory masking remains in acute and continuing care facilities, publicly accessible transit, taxis and ride-share. FNIHB MOHs support Nations who would like to continue recommending voluntary masking in community buildings or at gatherings.

The following additional changes will take effect on Aug. 16:

- Provincial mandatory masking orders will be lifted. Some masking in acute care or continuing care facilities may still be required. FNIHB MOHs support Nations who would like to continue recommending voluntary masking in community buildings or at gatherings.
- Isolation following a positive COVID-19 test result will no longer be required, but strongly recommended.
- Individuals with symptoms of any respiratory infection should still remain at home until symptoms have resolved.
- Isolation hotels and quarantine support will no longer be available off reserve. However, FNIHB recognizes that some communities may still have isolation facilities available to support individuals who want to isolate away from home.
- Public health will focus on investigating severe cases that require hospitalization and any deaths due to COVID-19.
- Daycares and schools will be supported with measures that would be effective for any respiratory virus if outbreaks are identified.

The FNIHB-AB public health team, including Medical Officers of Health, will continue to support First Nations Health staff in responding to cases and outbreaks of COVID-19. This includes ongoing support for in community rapid testing within the provincial testing guidelines. In addition, we recognize the unique risks faced by many First Nations and are committed to working on a community by community basis to support an enhanced testing approach when appropriate. Please note that there are also continued opportunities for rapid screening through the [Alberta Rapid Testing Program](#).

Alberta Cases:

as of August 3rd, 3:30 p.m. MST

AB Total Confirmed (Aug 2 nd – 126 new cases)	235,038
AB Recovered Cases	230,534
Confirmed First Nations On-reserve Cases	9,030
On-reserve Recovered Cases	8,904
On-Reserve Active Cases	34
Calgary Zone Confirmed	96,179
Central Zone Confirmed	21,026
Edmonton Zone Confirmed	78,270
North Zone Confirmed	26,798
South Zone Confirmed	12,747
Unknown Confirmed	18
Deaths due to COVID-19	2,328
On-reserve Deaths due to COVID-19	92
Variants of Concern Confirmed in Alberta	50,883

Critical Worker Benefit extended to Aug. 31

In order to make sure these businesses can focus on reopening while ensuring their employees can get the Critical Worker Benefit, the deadline for private sector employers to submit applications has been extended to August 31. In order to be eligible for the benefit, workers must have:

- Worked for an eligible employer
- Earned a gross hourly wage of \$25 an hour or less
- Worked at least 300 hours between October 12, 2020 and January 31, 2021.

Private sector employers can apply on behalf of employees at alberta.ca/critical-worker-benefit.aspx. Applications will be assessed in the order they are received. Full details available [here](#).

Regional Snapshot



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

Useful Links

Education Town Hall:

August 12, 2021 from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams meeting: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
Or call in (audio only)

[+1 587-414-2346, 340915188#](tel:+15874142346340915188)

COVID-19 rapid tests

Health Canada is leading on a marketing and advertising campaign that encourages Canadian businesses to order free COVID-19 rapid tests for their workplaces **and is seeking advice on reaching Indigenous business owners and community organizations**. Current promotional activities include digital advertising, organic social media, stakeholder outreach and articles in e-newsletters (such as Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's "COVID-19 and Your Business" newsletter; and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business newsletter). A variety of marketing material has been prepared for use by partners, including articles, display banners, social media graphics, web buttons and an infographic. Regular testing and screening of employees can help reduce the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and protect employees, customers and communities. For more information about rapid testing, click [here](#).

Vaccine Update



Vaccine Hesitancy Guide for Medical Professionals:

A poll by the Angus Reid Institute suggests that vaccine hesitancy is more common in Alberta than in the rest of the country. Researchers from the University of Calgary have developed a guidebook to support family doctors who have patients with vaccine hesitancy. This Guide differentiates common types of vaccine hesitancy that primary care clinicians may see and provides advice and resources on how to address vaccine hesitancy.

Find the guide here: <https://www.vhguide.ca/>

Importance of Becoming Fully Vaccinated :

Since January, 95% of cases and 87% of deaths from COVID-19 in Alberta have been in people who were not fully vaccinated. For Alberta's First Nations, 99.5% of the cases since January were not fully vaccinated. Similarly, there have been no deaths among fully vaccinated First Nations people. Vaccine effectiveness varies slightly for the different variants, but Alberta data demonstrates that a complete series remains 85-90% effective. A single dose offers some, but significantly less, protection than two doses. With the opening of the province and recent changes of health management in Alberta, the importance of immunization has never been more crucial. Vaccination remains the most critical component of protecting ourselves and our communities from COVID-19. FNIHB-AB will continue to offer support to communities for vaccination and testing. Please reach out if you wish to discuss the testing and/or vaccination strategy for your community. Please email questions to: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

Question of the Day

Q: How can we further support the mental health of our youth during this time?

A: The province has announced further funding for expansion of youth mental health hubs, which provide young Albertans with a one-stop shop for services that improve their mental health and overall wellness. Youth mental health hubs make it easier for youth outside of larger urban centres to seek help and support closer to home. A range of services will be available to youth, including mental health and addiction services, primary health care, social services, housing and school-based supports. Additional funding for the expansion of youth mental health hubs will be distributed over three years, with approximately \$3 million allocated in 2021-22. There are currently youth hubs at different stages of development in Medicine Hat, Fort Saskatchewan, Drayton Valley, Fort McMurray, the Tri-region area (Parkland County, Stony Plain and Spruce Grove), Grande Prairie, Enoch Cree Nation and Maskwacis. Additional locations are being explored. More details [here](#).

Vaccine Snapshot

as of August 2nd



65,261 doses of vaccine have been administered in **46** Nations (bands) in Alberta.



At least **36,977** First Nations people have received their first dose.



At least **4,481** First Nations people aged 65 years and older living on reserve or crown land have received their first dose.



At least **4,081** First Nations people aged 65 years and older have received two doses of the vaccine.



At least **28,284** First Nations people have received two doses of the vaccine.