

# COVID-19 Update

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Welcome to **COVID-19 Update**. Through this regular email AHS will keep you informed of decisions being made to protect and support Albertans, key public health information, and opportunities for you to connect with AHS.

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## Today's update

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## COVID-19 Status

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As of Sunday, April 12, Alberta now has 1,651 confirmed cases of COVID-19, an increase of 82 new cases in the past 24 hours. Of these, 237 are suspected of being community acquired. As of today, 44 people are in hospital, 14 of whom are in intensive care. The number of people who have recovered from COVID-19 is now 823.

In the past day, four people have died. All were residents of long term care centres. To date, 183 cases have been confirmed at continuing care facilities in the province.

We extend our sincere condolences to the families, friends and caregivers affected and are stepping up efforts with partners in the community to care for and protect older adults.

Effective April 15, continuing care workers must wear masks at all times when providing direct patient care or working in patient care areas. As well, starting April 16, workers in long term care and designated supportive living sites will only be allowed to work at one location. This requirement must be fully in place by April 23.

Our aggressive approach to testing for the pandemic continues. Alberta has now tested 74,709 people for COVID-19 and performed 77,316 tests. This includes completing 2,038 tests in the past 24 hours.

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# Things You Need to Know

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## **Continuous Masking Strategy Update**

The Alberta Health Services' Continuous Masking strategy was announced on Friday. Over the weekend, the five Zones worked with Logistics and Contracting, Procurement & Supply Management (CPSM) to estimate supply of procedure masks to ensure all facilities/sites have their required supplies. We began delivering stock to distributors today. Shipping to sites begins Monday and each site is developing a plan for their mask use.

AHS is also preparing to meet the need for PPE for the upcoming surge, as well as ensuring Alberta has the required supply of masks, gowns, gloves and N95 respirators for the future. As one provincial healthcare provider, AHS has strong purchasing power. We have had great success in securing large quantities of PPE.

We are confident our expected needs and supplies of ventilators will support the most severely ill patients. If data continues its current trend, we feel we will be in a good position to give Albertans the care they will need and keep our healthcare teams safe.

In addition to supplying our hospitals and healthcare centres, we will provide PPE supplies to physician offices, continuing care sites, seniors' lodges, pharmacists, midwives, emergency shelters and EMS teams across Alberta.

We are working with Alberta's Provincial Operations Centre and Provincial Emergency Social Services to ensure our partners have adequate inventory for essentials services.

**Most importantly, we would like to note:** the guidelines for continuous masking now also apply to home care and congregate living settings.

Healthcare workers providing direct patient care or working in patient care areas in AHS and community settings are to:

- Wear a surgical/procedure mask continuously, at all times and in all areas of the workplace when involved in direct patient contact or if adequate physical distancing from patients and co-workers cannot be maintained.
- Use surgical/procedure masks judiciously to help ensure availability throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Immediately change and safely dispose of a surgical/procedure mask whenever it is soiled or wet; it may have become contaminated; and after care for any patient on Droplet +/- Contact precautions (i.e. suspected or confirmed influenza-like illness or COVID-19).
- Follow [Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) protocols](#) including hand hygiene and using additional personal protective equipment when delivering patient care according to the AHS point-of-care risk assessment (PCRA).
- Dispose of the mask and perform hand hygiene when taking a break or eating a meal. Also maintain physical distancing and don a new mask before returning to work.

For more information see:

- [Guidelines for Continuous Masking in Healthcare Settings](#)
- [Guidelines for Continuous Masking in Home Care and Congregate Living Settings](#)

### **Cleaning at Home**

Many healthcare workers, first responders and essential services workers have asked how they and their families can be safe at home. AHS is therefore providing the following advice to both healthcare workers, and the public.

High touch surfaces are those touched often and most likely to be contaminated, such as:

- Tabletops
- Light switches
- Door knobs
- Sink taps
- Toilet handles
- Kitchen counter tops.

Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily or when visibly soiled.

Use a “wipe twice” or 2-step process to clean and disinfect. First wipe the surface thoroughly with soap and water to clean and remove soiling and debris. Then wipe again with a clean cloth saturated in a disinfectant to destroy or de-activate COVID-19 and other micro-organisms.

[Environmental Public Health recommends](#) two disinfectants:

- Diluted household bleach. Prepare fresh daily; add 80 mL (1/3 cup) of 5% household bleach to 4 litres (16 cups) of water.
- Accelerated hydrogen peroxide (0.5%), used according to label instructions.

AHS has a dedicated page for [PPE information](#) developed by the PPE task force, and more information about Infection Prevention and Control measures for personal items and clothing can be found [here](#).

### **Alberta Healthcare Auxiliaries Association Message**

The members of the Alberta Healthcare Auxiliary Association have been instrumental in providing services and equipment for their local community hospitals for many years.

As part of response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we made the difficult decision to halt their operations. This past week, the association’s executive team thanked AHS for closing their gift shops, visitor and thrift shops and stopping their members volunteering.

- *“Our responsibilities now are to stay home and protect our families and community by minimizing the exposure to the COVID-19 virus, and to take this opportunity to grow closer and cultivate a strong spirit of love and hope.*

- *“In saying that, our unending thanks, thoughts and prayers are also with the front-line healthcare providers throughout our province that together are working diligently to treat those individuals and families directly affected by the COVID-19 virus with professional expertise, patience and dignity.*
- *“A warm thank you to our healthcare leaders in your wisdom as they develop and implement strategies to combat and minimize the effects of this dreadful virus in our communities.*
- *“Together we will get through this difficult time. ‘We discover our role in life through our relationships with others.’ We are so very proud to be Albertans.”*

The association is joining AHS’ foundations and encouraging Albertans to show their support for healthcare workers by placing a heart in their front windows.

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## Be Well - Be Kind

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### **Connecting Hearts and Minds Over the Holiday**

Across the province, our teams have put tremendous efforts into caring for patients, families, colleagues and communities during the Easter and Passover weekend. In the spirit of these holidays, we again thank our staff, physicians and volunteers for their commitment, fortitude, kindness and unflinching imagination to connect with others during physical distancing. Here are just a few examples:

The **Allied Health team in the Central Zone** is ensuring all long-term care sites have iPads, through AHS and donations. The iPads help residents connect with loved ones and help healthcare teams maintain physical distancing while also enriching care and therapy for patients and residents. One such way is through “window” calls where loved ones and residents see each other through closed windows during a phone call. Another way is playing games with one another such as X’s and O’s.

The Central Zone Allied Health team also found a creative way to offer recreation therapy with a pony named Punch. Punch and his owner visited residents in all AHS owned and operated long term care sites in Wetaskiwin. As residents waited for their lunches to be delivered, Punch stopped by windows, much to the delight of residents eager to connect with a four-legged friend.

At the **Stollery Children’s Hospital** in Edmonton, the annual Easter Egg Hunt was turned into The First Ever Stollery Easter Egg Hunt Adventure. Staff with the Patient and Family Centred Care group brought fun to kids and families with an online search they could do from the hospital or home. A special shout out to staffer Michelle Childs and her husband Shawn for creating the virtual adventure. Try it with your family at [www.eastervr.ca](http://www.eastervr.ca).



**The Stollery Child Life** team also worked with the Easter Bunny to make sure each hospital patient had a special Easter gift bag delivered. Special thanks to these teams for their extra work bring some semblance of normalcy and fun to families during this difficult time.

An anonymous healthcare worker at the **South Health Campus in Calgary** sent this note about their co-workers: "Working with this team in such uncertain times is a blessing. The healthcare aides, respiratory therapists, unit clerks and nurses I get to work with every day are the most supportive I've ever worked with in my career. We are nervous, but we are in this together as a team. Educators and management on this unit have done a phenomenal job of keeping us informed and supporting their staff. I am so lucky to work with these people. They deserve to be reminded of how strong, capable and compassionate they are."

### **Acts of Kindness**

Our featured act of kindness today comes from Erin H, a registered nurse at the Rockyview General Hospital's intensive care unit. She wrote of Xandy, an "amazing" eight-year old boy who, with help from his mother, grandmother and younger sister Lulu, "have shown exceptional support to [our] team. The letter he sent to us shows kindness and caring for our community. He has made bags for us to put our scrubs into at the end of every shift, and then we toss the bag in the washer when we get home. I have been using a pillow case, and now I have something made with love to make me smile at the end of my shift instead. This child is seeing the good, doing something to help. It has made my heart burst with pride, and frankly I had a little cry that little kids are reaching out to help us."



My name is Xandy. I am 8 years old. I had a concussion last November and I was home from school for 2½ months. My Nana taught me & my Mom how to sew so that I could make my sister Christmas stuffies. After that my mom & I made pouches for the wounded animals in Australia. I was interviewed by a reporter and was in the newspaper and on the National news. Our friend told us how nurses & doctors need laundry bags for their dirty work clothes so they don't bring the virus home to their families. We made these for you sending all our love!



*Calgary kids Xandy (left) and Lulu make laundry bags with their mom and grandmother to give to healthcare workers so they can bring their clothes home safely to wash.*

Today we close our update by borrowing (and gently adapting) a message from an anonymous well-wisher. Thank you to everyone on the front-lines and behind the scenes of this pandemic. You sacrifice so much for our community every day and especially now. We are grateful. We personally stand in prayer and reflection over all of you to have the strength, wisdom, health equipment and everything you need

right now. Bless you.

We thank everyone who has changed their normal routines, treasured traditions and family and community gatherings to keep all Albertans safe this weekend. We know everyone is making sacrifices to stay at home and stop the spread of COVID-19.

With gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health

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