

PMAO Weekly Update

Dear AHS Midwifery Staff,

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COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit & Other Resources

A [COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit](#) is now available on [insite](#) and contains resources to help keep you updated on the latest information as it becomes available. This toolkit includes answers to frequently asked questions, links to additional resources, and more. These resources will be updated on an ongoing basis to reflect the latest updates.

Changes to Isolation Requirements

As announced by Alberta Health, effective January 3, 2022, the isolation period for [fully immunized](#) individuals has been reduced from 10 days from the start of symptoms to five days, or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. For asymptomatic people who are fully immunized, isolation has been reduced from 10 days to 5 days from the day the swab was taken, assuming symptoms didn't develop.

For those who are **not fully immunized**, isolation remains at 10 days from the start of symptoms or until they resolve, whichever is longer. For asymptomatic people who are not fully immunized, isolation remains at 10 days from the day the swab was taken, assuming symptoms didn't develop.

AHS will be implementing this new Alberta Health guidance for staff and physicians immediately. Staff who are fully immunized and symptom free are able to return to work after five days. Please review the updated [Alberta Health requirements](#), and contact your leader if you are eligible to return to work sooner than 10 days.

Please note AHS will not be changing the isolation requirements for acute care patients with COVID-19. The current guideline for isolation for COVID-19 patients is 14 days based on the severity of illness. In certain situations, isolation periods may be longer.

Guidance is outlined at the following link: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/frm-21624.pdf>

AHS is making this decision in recognition of the high-risk setting and vulnerability of patients.

Thank you for your continued support.

Attending work with COVID-19 Symptoms, Positive Test, or Close Contact

AHS has updated the [Attending work with COVID-19 symptoms, positive test, or close contact directive](#) to align with public health measures announced on Dec. 31, which came into effect on Jan. 3. These changes are necessary to balance the protection of our people and patients from the highly transmissible Omicron variant, as well as to ensure we have the staffing necessary to maintain critical services.

Key changes to the directive include:

- Shorter work restriction period for fully immunized healthcare workers who test positive for COVID-19. This means fully immunized workers can return to work after day 5 as long as symptoms are improving and you've been without fever for 24 hours.
- New guidance for healthcare workers who are close contacts:
 - Introduction of 10 days of rapid testing for close contacts who are fully immunized (note, this differs from the temporary frequent testing option under the [Immunization or Testing of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#)).
 - Fully immunized workers with a booster dose can remain at work if they are a close contact, without any testing requirement, as long as it has been at least 14 days since the booster dose.
 - Workers who are not fully immunized will be restricted from work for 14 days if they become a close contact.

Please continue to follow [CMOH orders](#) for work restriction requirements for staff working at continuing care.

Please note to obtain a rapid test kit:

- [Rapid test kits](#) are available at select locations, including pharmacies and assessment centres (pending availability - look for local communications)
- Unimmunized workers must continue to test at a private provider (not self-administered) as outlined in our immunization policy
- AHS is working to secure and distribute rapid tests to staff; full availability across the province and areas will take some time

Now that changes to the directive are effective, we have updated the [Fit for Work Tools](#) and the [Return to Work guide](#) and [decision chart](#).

Please note: some of the questions in the Fit for Work questionnaires have changed. Please read the following updated screening questionnaires below:

- [Standard](#) (Staff Acute Care & Non-continuing Care)
- [Staff working at continuing care](#)
- [Outbreak unit/area/site or unit on watch](#) (Staff – acute care/non-continuing care)

Staff must continue to use the [Online Fit for Work Screening Tool](#).

Summary of Healthcare Worker Testing Requirements

The attached and linked document – [Summary of Healthcare Worker Testing Requirements: Testing under the Mandatory Vaccination Policy versus Testing as a Close Contact](#) – provides additional clarity for workers for testing requirements for COVID-19 as it relates to:

- Healthcare workers who are not fully immunized, testing as a result of the [Immunization or Testing of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#).

- Fully immunized healthcare workers who may need to test as a result of becoming a close contact.

This is a summary for clarification about different testing requirements and scenarios. All return to work decisions must be based on the [Return to Work Decision Chart](#) information.

Update: Designated Support and Visitor Access Screening Questionnaires

As we continue to learn more about the Omicron variant of COVID-19, AHS is proactively taking precautions to limit transmission of the virus.

As such, AHS will continue to require that designated support persons and visitors, who test positive for COVID-19, whether asymptomatic or symptomatic, not enter an acute care, ambulatory, urgent or emergency services site for a **minimum of 10 days** from the positive test date or from the onset of COVID-19 symptoms, unless qualifying for a CMOH exemption as the designated support person for minor children or dependent adults in need of medical care. This is regardless of immunization status. For those who are symptomatic, symptoms must have resolved and they must be fever free for at least 24 hours before entry.

As healthcare settings are more vulnerable environments, maintaining the 10-day requirement will help us to protect those in our care.

Please review the screening questionnaires to ensure you are using the latest version:

- [Standard](#) (Daily Designated Support Person & Visitor Screening Questionnaire For Acute Care, Ambulatory, Emergency & Urgent Care)
- [Visitors to continuing care](#)

More information on designated support and visitor access is available at ahs.ca/visitation.

PPE Update: Extra Vigilance wearing PPE and N95 Usage

As we all know, people with COVID may be asymptomatic, and others may not recognize or disclose their COVID symptoms when presenting to our facilities. In order to best be protected from viral transmission, we are reminding all staff and providers to be extremely diligent about donning and doffing our required PPE.

As well, please note the updated PPE guidance for using N95 respirators in the [Joint Statement: COVID-19 and Personal Protective Equipment - December 22 2021 \(albertahealthservices.ca\)](#)

We are strongly recommending staff and providers working in any area of maternity care, when completing the point of care risk assessment, consider carefully the patient factors and nature of the environment when deciding about N95 respirator use. Note the PPE guidelines have shifted recently to a much broader consideration for using N95 respirators (memo attached).

Practices are still able to order PPE Supplies for COVID-19 from AHS at no charge and should continue to do so.

If you have any questions contact us at midwives@ahs.ca

Changes to COVID-19 PCR Testing Criteria

As announced by [Alberta Health](#) last week, the increase in Omicron cases and the demand for PCR testing has pushed our testing system beyond its capacity. As of Jan. 10, eligibility for PCR testing has changed to ensure those at highest risk continue to have access to a PCR test.

PCR testing continues to be available for healthcare workers and workers in specific high-risk settings, including those in group homes, disability support and shelter workers, correctional facility staff in provincial or federal facilities, and individuals who provide services in a clinical care setting including hospitals and seniors congregate care facilities. People in these settings can use the [COVID-19 Assessment & Testing tool](#) for healthcare workers and workers in specific high-risk settings.

PCR testing at AHS Assessment Centres is available for:

- People with symptoms of COVID-19 and who may meet the eligibility criteria for [Sotrovimab](#) monoclonal antibody treatment
- People with symptoms, who are a household member of a healthcare worker who works in continuing care or acute care
- People with symptoms who are pregnant
- People with symptoms who live or work in isolated and remote First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities
- Returning international travellers who become symptomatic within 14 days after their return to Canada

A full list of eligible groups is available on the [Government of Alberta website](#).

The [COVID-19 Assessment & Testing tool](#) has been updated to allow all eligible groups (including adults, children and youth) to book a PCR test with AHS.

Update on At-Home Rapid Tests

As announced by [Alberta Health](#) on Jan. 13, every Albertan will be eligible for a new free five-test kit every two weeks as long as supply is available.

The Government of Alberta has directly purchased 10 million rapid tests on top of the federal government's procurement, plus an additional 3.7 million tests this month.

Alberta Precision Laboratories has provided [information about the various forms of testing](#) and new [FAQs](#) about at-home rapid tests. There is also information available about rapid tests on [Alberta Health's rapid testing webpage](#).

Reminder: Helpful Websites

A reminder on where to find helpful information:

Personal Protective Equipment - <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17048.aspx>

Infection Prevention & Control - <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page6410.aspx>

COVID-19 Testing/Online Booking - <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17058.aspx>

Fit for Work - <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17076.aspx>

Visiting Guidelines - <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17001.aspx>

Help in Tough Times - <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx>

As always, please don't hesitate to contact our office with any questions or concerns.

Thank you

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