Alberta expands access to fourth vaccine doses

April 6, 2022

Alberta is expanding eligibility for fourth doses of COVID-19 vaccine and Paxlovid treatment to protect those most at risk from severe outcomes.

The number of COVID-19-positive patients in hospital remains stable and the total number of patients in hospital is normal for the time of year. However, the Omicron subvariant BA.2 now makes up about 80 per cent of new cases in the province, bringing potential for increased transmission and some increase in admissions.

To help protect Albertans from severe outcomes, the province is increasing eligibility for fourth doses of COVID-19 vaccine and Paxlovid treatment, making additional COVID-19 vaccines available and continuing to make rapid tests easily accessible.

As the province continues through this transition period, it is important for all Albertans to consider their individual risks. If they or close contacts are at risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19, the province recommends taking additional precautions.

"As more Albertans get back to normal, we will see cases and virus levels rise and fall. However, these fluctuations do not necessarily require the measures we've put in place before. The number of COVID-positive patients in hospital remains stable at this time. The total number of patients in our hospitals is also stable, within normal capacity overall, and in line with the level at this time of year before the pandemic. We're well-positioned to manage some increase in admissions if we see that, and Albertans have access to vaccines and antiviral treatments for protection against severe outcomes. I encourage everyone to get vaccinated with every dose you're eligible for and to stay home if you're feeling unwell."

Jason Copping, Minister of Health

Expanding fourth doses

Beginning April 12, all Albertans age 70 and older, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Alberta age 65 and older, and all seniors in congregate care regardless of age can receive a fourth dose of vaccine. This is in line with a recent recommendation from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).

Classification: Public

Vaccines give effective protection from severe outcomes from both BA.2 and BA.1, and a fourth dose for those at highest risk will further enhance protection.

Eligible individuals can book their fourth dose provided at least five months have passed since their third. Appointments are available through the [Alberta Vaccine Booking System](#) or by calling 811 or a participating pharmacy.

Individuals who require a fourth dose to meet international travel rules may also book appointments, however, these doses are not currently clinically recommended.

Increasing vaccine choice

Starting April 12, Alberta will receive 10,000 doses of Novavax's Nuvaxovid.

Nuvaxovid is a two-dose protein subunit vaccine that does not use mRNA technology and is approved for those 18 and older. Due to limited supply, appointments for this vaccine can be booked by calling 811 only.

Starting April 12, children age six to 11 will also have an additional option with the Moderna mRNA vaccine. This is in line with recent recommendations from NACI. Appointments are available through the [Alberta Vaccine Booking System](#) or by calling 811 or a participating pharmacy.

Expanding Paxlovid eligibility

While it is strongly recommended that Albertans take preventative steps such as vaccination to protect themselves against COVID-19, the province is also expanding access to the antiviral drug Paxlovid.

Effective April 6, eligibility has expanded to include:

- First Nations, Métis and Inuit people age 45 and older who are unvaccinated or have received only one dose of vaccine
- individuals living in long-term care and designated supportive living settings, regardless of vaccination status

[Previously eligible](#) individuals, including all individuals who are immunocompromised, regardless of vaccination status, remain eligible.

This treatment is available for patients who have a [lab-confirmed COVID-19 infection](#) if they can receive the treatment within five days of symptom onset.

Ensuring health-care system capacity

Alberta's government is adding up to 50 permanent, fully staffed intensive care unit (ICU) beds this year alone thanks to a $100-million investment in Budget 2022, an almost 30 per cent increase over current capacity. These beds will expand Alberta's health-care capacity in order to prevent the system from becoming overwhelmed, a major concern during previous waves of the COVID-19 pandemic

Accessing rapid tests

Alberta continues to provide rapid tests at no cost. More than 14.2 million rapid tests have been distributed to pharmacies and AHS assessment centres for public access.

To find a location, visit alberta.ca/CovidRapidTests. An Alberta Health Care card is not required to pick up a rapid test kit.

Related information

- [COVID-19 info for Albertans](#)
- [Book your vaccine](#)