

primary cares

News & updates from the Calgary Zone



Paxlovid testing update, webinar

Plans to make it quicker and more practical for family physicians to prescribe Paxlovid took a big step forward this week as the eligibility criteria was amended to allow for rapid antigen testing.

At-home and in-clinic antigen tests can now be used to help determine eligibility for the oral anti-viral medication, with immediate effect. Previously, only a positive PCR test was acceptable – a huge barrier given limited access to testing and the requirement that Paxlovid is taken within five days of symptom onset.

- **Testing options:** Consult this [advice document for primary care providers](#).
- **No-cost test kits:** Tests can be requested through AHS (not PCNs): [Rapid Antigen Test Requisition](#).
- **Register for Calgary Zone Paxlovid webinar:** Hear directly from family physicians who are prescribing Paxlovid and find out more about local supports at our next Calgary Zone webinar, which will be held on Monday, May 30, from 6-8 p.m. [Register](#).

Rapid antigen tests are being made available to clinics to enable family physicians to perform testing in a clinic environment, which can support diagnosis and expedite treatment for those who meet the [eligibility criteria](#). At-home testing and virtual care assessments are also permitted in different scenarios. When using at-home testing, physicians are asked if they are confident in a patient's "skill and ability" to administer the test at home. AHS assessment centres are continuing to offer PCR tests, where appropriate and subject to eligibility.

The changes are summarized in a [key messages](#) document. Other resources you may find helpful are listed below or visit the [Paxlovid section](#) of the COVID-19 page at [specialistlink.ca](#):

- Physicians and clinic staff need to find out which pharmacies are dispensing Paxlovid prior to prescribing. They can now search via an [online map](#).
- Physicians who start prescribing have access to support through the AHS oral antiviral program via RAAPID (403-944-4486), as well as their community pharmacist. Download the Paxlovid [provider FAQ](#).
- Patients can still access Paxlovid via the dedicated Health Link line at 1-844-343-0971. Do not call 811. A [patient FAQ](#) is available.
- If you have questions about Paxlovid prescribing that you would like answered at the Calgary Zone webinar on Monday, May 30, or if you would be willing to share your own experiences, please email us at info@calgaryareapcns.ca.
- A prescribing resource guide is [available online](#).

Long COVID patient video series

A new video series that explains how to manage long COVID symptoms has been launched by the Alberta Healthy Living Program – Calgary Zone.

The videos replace a series of Long COVID workshops that have been hosted by the program, which come to an end in June. A few spots are still available in the final in-person workshops. [Click here](#) for more details.

Check out the [post-COVID resources page](#) at Specialist Link for a full list of videos, or click one of the following links: [Long COVID overview](#) | [Managing a Persistent Cough](#) | [Loss of taste and smell](#) | [Tips for getting started with exercise](#) | [Long COVID symptoms](#) | [Nutrition and fatigue](#) | [Managing pain](#) | [Exercising at the right level](#) | [Long COVID treatment](#) | [Difficulty swallowing](#) | [Managing sleep](#) | [Managing stress](#)

New phone number, registration: The Alberta Healthy Living Program has a new toll-free number for patients registering by phone: 1-844-527-1160. It replaces the English, Cantonese/Mandarin and Hindi/Punjabi phone lines. Callers can now request their language of choice when they call.

The registration process for all health education classes and self-management workshops that start after Sunday, May 1 has also changed. Online registration is available via the following links:

- [Calgary Zone class descriptions](#)
- [Calgary Zone schedule](#)

Quick links

Paxlovid webinar

As mentioned above, on Monday, May 30, from 6-8 p.m., the Calgary Zone's popular webinar series returns with a special focus on prescribing in primary care. Hosted by Dr. Rick Ward and Dr. Christine Luelo, it will feature a panel of physicians who have been prescribing Paxlovid to patients. If there are questions you would like the panel to address, please send them to info@calgaryareapcns.ca. [Register](#).

Video: COVID Talks for Docs

If you missed this week's Paxlovid webinar from the Alberta Medical Association, you can watch the [video here](#). The webinar answered common questions about Paxlovid and detailed supports available to physicians.

Reminder: Ukrainian evacuees

A reminder that an [early assessment tool](#) is available to support physicians caring for Ukrainian evacuees. A [chest X-ray letter](#) is available for patients. [More information](#).

You Gut This: NAFLD and Hepatitis C webinar

On Thursday, May 5, from 7-8:30 p.m., the latest University of Calgary You Gut This webinar series features a session on Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) and Hepatitis C. [More details](#).

Reminder: Health Summit Series webinar

On Wednesday, May 11, from 10:30 a.m. to noon, the second session of the Canadian Medical Association's Health Summit Series will take place. The latest installment of the Doing Health Differently: During COVID and Beyond series is titled, *Health care in Canada: How Might it Drive Economic Growth?* [Register](#).