

## Update: April 30

On April 29, 2021, Premier Kenney announced new COVID-19 restrictions which took effect April 30<sup>th</sup>. Physiotherapists working in school settings and those operating out of recreation and fitness facilities may be affected by these restrictions. However, no new restrictions on health services were announced.

Importantly, the [restrictions](#) on in-person learning for students in grades 7-12, indoor fitness, and indoor sport and recreation activities will only apply to municipalities or regions where there are at least 350 cases per 100,000 people and 250 active cases. It is therefore imperative that physiotherapists know the active case rate and number of active cases in their region and the restrictions that apply based on those metrics. You can find this information on the Government of Alberta [website](#) (scroll down).

## What does this mean for physiotherapists working in “hot spot” regions?

### School settings:

- Grades 7-12 will shift to online learning until May 17<sup>th</sup> at the earliest. In-person learning continues for grades K-6 unless the school division has requested, and Alberta Education has granted a shift to online learning.
- Restrictions on indoor sport and performance include a prohibition on “all youth activities, including for students still learning in classrooms.” As such, physiotherapists seeking to observe a group of K-6 students participating in group physical activity for the purpose of identifying those in need of individual physiotherapy assessment and intervention will only be able to do so outdoors.
- Physiotherapists in this sector can employ telerehabilitation, if appropriate for their patient’s condition, to address ongoing physiotherapy needs of students engaged in online learning.

### Community-based practice (private practice, mobile practice, home-based businesses):

- Physiotherapists can continue to provide one-on-one services, by appointment only.
- Recreation facilities are required to close. Physiotherapists operating in these settings will need to discuss their business operations with facility owners and are advised to anticipate questions, concerns or complaints from community members who observe the physiotherapist’s operations in these settings.

### All physiotherapists:

- Physiotherapists can continue to provide physiotherapy services, provided they adhere to the public health restrictions, measures outlined in the [Guidance for Resuming Physiotherapy Practice During a Pandemic](#), and related guidance from [Physiotherapy Alberta](#).
- Physiotherapists in community settings have been eligible to receive a vaccination against COVID-19 since April 12, 2021. More information about Alberta's vaccination plan can be found on the Government of Alberta [website](#). Physiotherapists are encouraged to access vaccination as soon as they are able.

### **Easing restrictions in long-term care:**

The announcement on April 29<sup>th</sup> follows a separate announcement from [April 26](#) in which the Premier and Minister Shandro announced an easing of restrictions in long-term care and continuing care facilities in the province, effective May 10<sup>th</sup>. Details of what will be permitted remain to be seen, and may vary by site, but appear to focus primarily on indoor and outdoor social visits.

The changes expected on May 10 are not anticipated to alter physiotherapy service provision. Group activities in these settings have been permitted for some time for groups of 5 or fewer residents, provided social distancing and appropriate cleaning and disinfecting of equipment occurs.

## **Conclusion**

While the easing of restrictions in long-term care provides a glimmer of hope for what's to come for all sectors as vaccination becomes widespread, the "hot spot" restrictions were announced on a day when the number of ICU admissions due to COVID-19 in Alberta matched the previously reported peak from December 28, 2020, and Alberta recorded its highest active case count and highest daily new case count of the pandemic.

Over the past several months, Physiotherapy Alberta has repeatedly called on physiotherapists to review the infection prevention and control measures they have in use to protect patients and themselves and to redouble their efforts to maintain safe practice environments. We have every confidence that physiotherapists have done this.

We recognize the challenges that physiotherapists in all settings have faced throughout the pandemic and acknowledge that we are all tired of this pandemic and equally concerned by the latest case numbers. These new measures are in place to prevent health system collapse and as health professionals, physiotherapists recognize the importance of that objective. In the face of this current situation, we ask you to consider if there is one thing you can do, one more step you can take, personally or professionally, to help to drive these numbers down.