

Update: June 2, 2021

Recent updates to COVID-19 quarantine rules in Alberta related to individuals who have been vaccinated have resulted in several calls to Physiotherapy Alberta.

The changes to quarantine rules mean that an individual's vaccination status as either fully or partly vaccinated, will be factored into whether they must quarantine following a close contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19.

## Close Contacts

It is important to note that [Alberta Health's definition of a close contact](#) is not changed from previous. If a health professional was:

- Wearing a medical grade surgical or procedure mask **and**
- Practicing rigorous hand hygiene,

**And the patient:**

- Was asymptomatic,
- Was not themselves a close contact of someone with COVID-19 **and**
- Had not recently traveled outside of Canada at the time of the treatment visit.

The health professional is not considered a close contact of a patient who develops symptoms of COVID-19 within 48 hours of their appointment and goes on to test positive for the virus.

## Public Health Measures Continue

With the above information in mind, it remains imperative that physiotherapists continue to employ infection prevention and control measures including use of PPE, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting of equipment, and physical distancing when possible.

As noted in the [Open for Summer Plan](#), distancing and masking requirements are to remain in effect for both Stage 1 and 2.

## Quarantine Requirements

However, whether an individual is required to quarantine following a close contact, and the duration of that quarantine, **so long as they themselves remain asymptomatic**, has changed. This adds a layer of complexity to the patient screening process and decisions regarding whether a physiotherapist is allowed to attend work following a close contact (e.g., contact

with a COVID+ case outside of work, with a patient later found to have been symptomatic at the time of treatment, or due to a lack of appropriate PPE during treatment).

Physiotherapists who are fully or partially vaccinated should review the isolation and quarantine requirement information available on the Government of Alberta [website](#).

**Physiotherapists must adhere to the directions of public health officials if they are directed to self-isolate or quarantine.**

## Patient Screening

Due to the changes in quarantine requirements, physiotherapists are advised to adjust the screening questions they use at the time of booking and when the patients arrive for treatment. Questions should relate to:

- [Signs and symptoms of infection](#),
- Recent travel,
- Recent close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and
- Whether the individual has been directed by public health officials to quarantine or self-isolate.

Physiotherapy Alberta has received calls from physiotherapists wanting to know if they should be asking patients about their vaccine status. Physiotherapists are advised not to ask patients about their vaccine status for the following reasons:

- Privacy legislation requires that health professionals only collect personal information “for purposes that are reasonable” and only to the extent reasonable for meeting those purposes. (PIPA, Section 11)

Vaccine status is not information that would typically be collected by a physiotherapist and would not be needed to provide physiotherapy care; therefore, it is private health information that should not be collected by physiotherapists.

- Physiotherapists who collect this information may be tempted to try to interpret quarantine requirements on their own.

To do so is beyond the scope of physiotherapy practice.

The physiotherapist’s limited data collection may lead them to make incorrect interpretations regarding quarantine requirements for themselves or their patient. Physiotherapists must adhere to the directions of public health officials and should recognize their expertise in this area.

- There is also a risk that knowledge of a patient's vaccination status may create a false sense of security for physiotherapists, leading them to decrease their vigilance in the use of PPE and infection prevention and control measures. Physiotherapists are reminded that vaccinations are only one measure in use to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 in the practice setting. While effective at preventing severe illness and death, this does not mean that vaccinated individuals cannot become ill with or transmit COVID-19 to others.

## Vaccine Program Update

On June 1, 2021, Premier Kenney announced the roll out of second doses of COVID-19 vaccines. Eligibility to book a second dose of the vaccine will be based on the date that you received your first dose, and the vaccine you received.

If you received an **mRNA vaccine** (Moderna or Pfizer):

- First dose in March or earlier – book second dose starting now
- First dose in April – book second dose starting June 14
- First dose in May – book second dose starting June 28

Individuals who received an AstraZeneca vaccine as their first dose are directed to the Government of Alberta website for information regarding second dose options, including when to schedule a second dose appointment.

While the announcements of the Open for Summer Plan and roll out of vaccine second doses provide some hope for the future, Alberta is only at Stage 1 of the plan. Our shared efforts must continue over the weeks ahead to ensure success.