

Navigating Alberta's New Healthcare System

Are you feeling unsure where to go within the reshaped healthcare system? You're not alone. Alberta's healthcare system has been organized into four main areas, each responsible for different types of care. This guide will explain where you can go, what services are available, and who can help you.

If you are ever unsure, call Health Link: 811 (24/7)

1. Recovery Alberta

Mental health, addiction, and recovery support

Recovery Alberta supports people experiencing mental health challenges, substance use concerns, or recovery needs.

When to Use Recovery Alberta

- Mental health concerns or crisis
- Addiction or substance use support
- Detox or withdrawal management
- Ongoing recovery services

Services You Can Expect

- Hospital and community mental health care
- Detoxification and withdrawal management
- Outpatient and virtual care
- Community outreach and housing supports

Focus of Care

- Faster access to help
- Treating mental health and addiction as healthcare
- Reducing stigma and barriers
- Supporting long-term recovery and well-being

How to Access Help

- Mental Health Helpline: **1-877-303-2642**
- Addiction Helpline: **1-866-332-2322**
- Health Link: **811**
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2. Primary Care Alberta

Your first stop for everyday healthcare

Primary Care Alberta is the main point of contact for most health concerns and supports ongoing wellness.

When to Use Primary Care

- Family doctor visits and checkups
- Preventive care and screenings
- Chronic illness management
- Prescription renewals
- Mild to moderate mental health concerns

Services You Can Expect

- Care from family doctors, nurses, and pharmacists
- Dietitians, social workers, physiotherapy, and therapists
- Preventive and routine healthcare
- Ongoing management of long-term conditions
- Virtual appointments where available

Focus of Care

- Helping everyone have a regular healthcare provider
- Keeping people healthy and out of hospital
- Providing culturally safe, respectful care
- Improving access in rural and underserved communities

Having a regular primary care provider can reduce emergency room visits.

3. Acute Care Alberta

Emergencies, hospitals, and surgery

Acute Care Alberta oversees hospitals, emergency departments, urgent care centres, and surgical services.

When to Use Acute Care

- Medical emergencies (heart attack, stroke, serious injury)
- Severe or sudden symptoms
- Surgery or inpatient hospital care
- Ambulance and emergency medical services

Services You Can Expect

- Emergency departments and urgent care centres
- Hospital stays and intensive care
- Surgical services
- Ambulance and emergency response
- Specialized hospital clinics

Focus of Care

- Reducing emergency room and surgery wait times
- Improving access in rural and remote areas
- Supporting safe discharge from hospital
- Improving coordination with home and community care

***Before leaving hospital, ask about follow-up appointments, medications, and home supports.*

4. Assisted Living Alberta

Home care, supportive living, and long-term care

Assisted Living Alberta supports people who need ongoing help to live safely and well.

When to Use Assisted Living Services

- Help at home with daily activities
- Transitioning out of hospital
- Supportive living or long-term care needs
- Planning for aging or declining independence

Types of Continuing Care

- **Type A:** Full-time RN care in licensed long-term care homes
- **Type B:** Supportive living with some independence and shared services and care from Healthcare Aides.
- **Type C:** Palliative care

Services You Can Expect

- Home care and community supports
- Personal care and nursing services
- Supportive living and long-term care placements
- Social and community-based services

Focus of Care

- Helping people remain at home as long as possible
- Increasing care spaces
- Improving coordination between hospital and community care
- Supporting dignity, choice, and quality of life

***You can request reassessments if care needs change by talking to the appropriate department (long-term care manager, homecare manager) or to your doctor.*

5. Indigenous and Rural Healthcare

Alberta is working to improve access to culturally safe healthcare for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples through Indigenous-led services.

For rural communities, virtual care and coordinated referrals are expanding to improve access and reduce travel.

- Indigenous language translation service are available throughout Canada and is provided by agencies like Nations Translation Group, Lexis Communication, and specialized firms such as Languages in Motion which offers translations in many languages.
- Document translation, interpretation and cultural consulting for government, health and the private sector are services that are provided.
- In Alberta, Alberta Health Services offers translations in 23 Indigenous languages. You can access the list of services at the link below.

***You can ask for culturally appropriate or Indigenous-specific care at <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/811/Page18442.aspx>*

Helpful Tips:

- Write down questions before appointments
- Bring a support person when possible
- Ask who to contact if symptoms worsen
- Keep a list of medications and allergies
- Speak up if something does not feel right

Remember

You are not expected to navigate the healthcare system alone.

Help is available — and it is okay to ask.

Health Link: 811

alberta.ca/refocusing-health-care-in-alberta