

## COVID-19: Information from the College of Midwives of Alberta - Update October 1, 2021

The College of Midwives of Alberta (CMA) recognizes the devastating impacts of the global COVID 19 pandemic on Alberta families and communities. We acknowledge that midwives have played an important part in providing safe care to their clients during this challenging time. In light of the recent Delta variant and the increased risks to pregnant people, CMA strongly recommends that all eligible midwives be fully immunized for COVID 19. Vaccines play an important role in protecting the public along with other health measures as outlined in the *Public Health Act*.

The CMA remains focused on the primary mandate of public safety. The public must receive a consistent and clear message and CMA encourages midwives to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of their clients and communities through verifiable evidence-based information regarding COVID-19 from reliable sources. Misinformation disseminated by midwives puts them at risk of complaints regarding unprofessional conduct, and disciplinary measures may be taken according to The Alberta *Health Professions Act*.

The CMA is aware that AHS is implementing an Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy, and this Policy may have an impact on the midwifery workforce and the clients under their care. **Please see the CMA website under the “COVID 19” tab for current and updated information for midwives and clients.**

### COVID-19 Vaccination During Pregnancy

The fourth wave of COVID-19 and the Delta variant are having significant adverse effects on unvaccinated pregnant clients. As a primary care provider, you are already aware of the increased risk your clients have for becoming seriously ill and being admitted to ICU when they are unvaccinated. You know that these circumstances have created severe impacts on Alberta families and to the load on the ICU staff and health system. You also know that preterm labor increases with unvaccinated clients who contract COVID-19. In addition, pregnant clients are also at higher risk of severe disease and complications, especially with co-morbidities such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. These clients can also deteriorate quickly. Pregnancy is **not** an exemption from receiving the vaccine, pregnancy may very well be the reason for getting vaccinated.

### Clinical Decision-making

Midwives play a vital role in managing and containing the spread of COVID-19. Registered Midwives in Alberta are expected provide current, objective, unbiased, **evidence-informed** information on COVID-19. Any misinformation regarding COVID-19 and/or COVID-19 vaccination disseminated by registered midwives is very likely to inform families, schools, workplaces and businesses where your clients have contact. Knowing this, it is crucial that advice from midwives on COVID-19 vaccination is rooted in the latest scientific evidence.

Firstly, the role of midwives with respect to facilitating informed decision-making with their clients is

to provide factual information and options to the client. It is the client's role to make their own decision.

When a client asks your advice or opinion on COVID-19 immunization, they see you as a trusted resource because of your professional designation and relationship. In keeping with this relationship, the CMA expects you to provide clients with advice that is:

- Within your scope of practice
- In line with provincial public health guidance around masking, physical distancing, handwashing and vaccinations
- Grounded in science and best practices

### **Role of the CMA**

The CMA has a mandate to protect clients and the public. Midwives registered with the CMA have a duty to provide clients with safe care, including protecting them from the risk of infection. CMA and other health professional regulators in Alberta share serious concerns about how the spread of misinformation that is anti-vaccine, anti-mask-wearing, anti-physical distancing or that otherwise undermines public health orders and guidance set out in the *Public Health Act*. We also have concerns about regulated health professionals promoting or sharing information about COVID-19 treatments that are not supported by widely accepted scientific evidence.

Any misinformation may put a midwife at risk for disciplinary action.

**Unprofessional Conduct:** Means one or more of the following, whether it is disgraceful or dishonourable (*HPA s.1(pp)(i-xii)*):

- I. Displaying a lack of knowledge of or lack of skill or judgment in the provision of professional services.
- II. Contravention of the *Health Professions Act, the Midwives Profession Regulation, Standards of Practice for Midwives in Alberta, Alberta Competencies for Midwives*, and/or the **CMA Code of Ethics**.
- III. Contravention of another enactment that applies to the profession.

Right now, life is complicated for everyone here in Alberta. CMA hopes that you are healthy and safe, and that your clients are as well.

Cheers to being part of the solution!