



# Connect Care

## Frequently Asked Questions: General

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<b>About Connect Care</b>	3
What is Connect Care?	3
What will it do?	3
What is a clinical information system (CIS)?	3
Who are we partnering with for Connect Care?	3
Why do we need Connect Care?	4
Where will Connect Care be available?	4
When is Connect Care coming to my area?	4
<b>Our Jobs</b>	5
How will this affect my job?	5
Will there be training and support?	5
Is there support for staff who aren't comfortable using electronic systems?	5
When will we learn more specific details about how to manage and support the change to Connect Care?	6
<b>Our Work</b>	6
When will it be possible to see how the system will work in my area?	6
What kind of clinical information and tools will the Connect Care clinical information system (CIS) contain?	6
Where is the clinical information coming from and who is making the decisions?	6
Will family physicians get to use Connect Care?	7
Does Connect Care replace eCLINICIAN?	7
Do other provinces use similar systems? Would we be able to connect with other systems in the future?	7
<b>The Process</b>	7
How are you getting feedback from end users?	7
Are patients being involved in the design of Connect Care?	7
How will you make sure all of our patient information is in the system and accurate before launch?	8
When will all the sites have wireless Internet?	8
Will we have enough computers to do our work in the new system?	8
How will you make sure our clinical devices work with the new system?	8
Where will all the Connect Care information be stored?	8

**Patients** ..... 8

    How will Connect Care affect patients? ..... 8

    How will patient information be protected? ..... 9

    Will there be a way to address patient concerns about sensitive information being viewed by other healthcare providers? ..... 9

    How will patients learn about the new system? ..... 9

    Who owns the health information collected in a CIS? ..... 9

    What should I tell patients who have questions I can't answer? ..... 9

The Connect Care General FAQs will be updated as additional information is available. Please send your questions or comments to [connectcare@ahs.ca](mailto:connectcare@ahs.ca).



## About Connect Care

### What is Connect Care?

Connect Care is the bridge between information, healthcare teams, patients—and the future. The foundation of Connect Care is a common clinical information system (CIS) that will allow healthcare providers a central access point to patient information, common clinical standards and best healthcare practices.

The whole healthcare team, including patients, will have the best possible information throughout the care journey. Healthcare will be improved for both patients and healthcare providers.

It will be in place everywhere Alberta Health Services (AHS) provides healthcare services and where we partner to provide healthcare services, including hospitals, clinics, continuing care facilities, cancer centres, mental health facilities and AHS-run community health sites, as well as at Carewest, CapitalCare, Covenant Health, Calgary Laboratory Services and DynaLIFE.

Connect Care is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for AHS and our partners to transform how we provide care to patients.

### What will it do?

Connect Care will create a seamless health information network. With Connect Care, healthcare providers will be able to:

- Easily access comprehensive and up-to-date patient information in one place, and document care using desktop computers and other technology
- Support transitions of care through a single patient record
- Order lab, diagnostic imaging and other tests, with results appearing in the patient's electronic medical record
- Order and dispense medication, record medication histories and do medication reconciliation
- Securely communicate with other members of the care team to coordinate care, ask for referrals or advice, and follow up on a patient's progress
- Securely communicate with patients, who will have access to their own medical records through Connect Care's patient portal
- Easily access clinical best practice information to help inform care orders
- Access analytics tools to chart a patient's progress, or to see how groups of patients are responding to treatment
- Access specialized modules of tools and resources
- Most importantly, we will be better supported in delivering safe, high-quality care for patients, leading to better health outcomes.

### What is a clinical information system (CIS)?

A CIS is an electronic tool that provides healthcare providers one central access point to patient information, common clinical standards and best healthcare practices. As part of Connect Care, a single CIS will be implemented across Alberta.

### Who are we partnering with for Connect Care?

After almost one year of consultations with hundreds of physicians, staff and patients, AHS selected Epic Systems Corporation as the partner for Connect Care.



## Why do we need Connect Care?

AHS currently has more than 1,300 independent health information systems, many that help manage patient information. This means that patient information is often fragmented. We don't always have a complete picture of a patient's health history available when we need it, and neither do patients. Managing so many independent systems is also complex and unsustainable.

### Connect Care will put the focus on patients by:

- Giving them on-demand access to their health information, helping them be active members of their own healthcare team
- Reducing the length of hospital stays
- Improving communication

### Connect Care will lead to better health outcomes by:

- Giving healthcare teams a more complete picture of a patient's health
- Providing the whole healthcare team with the best possible information throughout the care journey
- Building provincial best practice standards into the system

### Connect Care will make us more efficient by:

- Providing a single access point to health information for AHS and its partners
- Reducing the use of paper and printing supplies
- Improving the efficiency of laboratory and support services
- Reducing unnecessary variation in clinical practice

## Where will Connect Care be available?

Connect Care will be in place everywhere AHS provides healthcare services and where we partner to provide healthcare services using the AHS record of care. This includes:

- Hospitals
- Clinics
- Continuing Care
- Cancer centres
- Mental health facilities
- AHS-run community health sites
- Carewest
- CapitalCare
- Covenant Health
- Calgary Laboratory Services locations
- DynaLIFE locations

Connect Care will also allow patients to access their information electronically from wherever they have Internet access.

## When is Connect Care coming to my area?

Connect Care implementation is happening in multiple waves to minimize disruptions for patients and healthcare providers. There will be nine implementation waves in total, happening between late 2019 and late 2022.

A final timeline will be available in fall 2018. Up-to-date timelines can be found at [insite.ahs.ca/connectcare](https://insite.ahs.ca/connectcare)



## Our Jobs

### How will this affect my job?

Connect Care will mean changes to workflow, processes, and how we share information.

For example, physicians, clinicians and clinical support staff will see changes to the way they enter and access patient records and share data. As we move to common clinical documentation, decision support tools and inquiry support tools, some processes may change as well.

Non-clinical staff may see process changes in areas such as billing, supply management, Housekeeping, Environmental Services and Portering, as well as data analytics and reporting.

Exactly what will change for you will depend on the type of job you do and where you are located. Much more detail will follow as we get closer to your site's launch date.

While we don't know the precise implications of Connect Care to current roles within the organization we are committed to treating all employees fairly and with respect through this transition and will at all times adhere to the terms of our collective agreements and our Non-union Exempt Employees terms and conditions

### Will there be training and support?

Connect Care will require extensive training across AHS and our partners. Everyone who will use the system will receive training designed specifically for their roles. The training will be provided in a number of ways, including e-learning, classroom training, "playground" practice environments, as well as tip sheets and other resources. Trainees will be required to complete a proficiency assessment before they are given access to the live system. Additional support will be provided as required.

Classroom training will begin at least two months before Connect Care launches at your site. Course catalogues and detailed registration instructions will be provided as schedules are finalized.

Support for new Connect Care users will be provided by "Super Users" scheduled on each shift during and for a time following the launch period.

Super Users are local employees who will receive additional training before their colleagues. They will help support classroom training prior to launch periods and will work as an extra person on the shift, free to support their peers in the system during the launch.

Following launch periods, the Super Users will return to their regular work areas and shift rotations and will continue to support their peers with their added training.

### Is there support for staff who aren't comfortable using electronic systems?

While some staff have lots of experience with electronic health (eHealth) systems like eClinician or Sunrise, others may not.

The eHealth Competence program will provide resources to help care providers and clinical support staff to become more comfortable with these technologies before they start training on the Connect Care CIS.

Starting in early 2019, staff will be able to access eHealth Competence resources online. Participants will be able to assess their current level of knowledge, and develop their skills, efficiency and comfort level using eHealth systems.

Job aids will also be available to guide leaders and managers in coaching and supporting staff to develop their abilities.



## When will we learn more specific details about how to manage and support the change to Connect Care?

A Clinical and Operational Readiness (CORE) framework has been developed to help leaders and teams get ready for Connect Care's implementation and optimization. The CORE framework is designed to support decision making and communication between managers and staff, help organize readiness activities, and support collaboration between managers and supervisors and the Connect Care project team.

To support readiness for each wave of implementation, managers will be provided with a Connect Care Readiness Playbook that will help organize and track key readiness activities. This one-stop shop for change management will have information, tools and resources related to:

1. Foundational Readiness
2. Training Readiness
3. Launch Readiness
4. Optimize and Thrive Readiness

The Playbook is being developed with input from clinical and operational leaders and front-line clinicians. It will provide tools and strategies to address change management for people, processes and tools. For each wave, chapters of the Playbook will be released to match the activities needed to prepare programs, zones, sites and units for implementation starting a year before launch and continuing through your site's implementation. For example, for Wave 1 in Fall 2019, the first chapter related to clinical practice changes will be released in Fall 2018.

## Our Work

### When will it be possible to see how the system will work in my area?

As we work through the Design and Build phases of the project, additional information will become available. Starting in fall 2018, look for a poster series that details what Connect Care will mean for specific roles. In early 2019, you will also have a chance to see demonstration videos showing how the system will handle key workflows. Please continue to check the [Connect Care Insite page](#), the [AHS Connect Care pages](#), the Connect Care newsletter and email updates for up-to-date project details.

### What kind of clinical information and tools will the Connect Care clinical information system (CIS) contain?

Connect Care will give us access to resources to support best practices and consistency. These include:

- Clinical documentation — templates, flow sheets, forms and questionnaires
- Clinical decision support tools — references, reminders, alerts, assists (including calculators, decision rules and order sets) and guides (including pathways, plans of care and guides to best practice)
- Clinical inquiry support tools — chronic disease registries, key performance indicators and in-system analytics that help users answer questions about personal or system performance

### Where is the clinical information coming from and who is making the decisions?

Clinical System Design (CSD) is the process for planning, selecting, designing and building clinical content in the Connect Care CIS to support patient care.

As a starting point, Connect Care Committees and Area Councils, with the help of the Clinical Knowledge and Content Management (CKCM) program are assembling the best content, including order sets, guidelines and standards, from AHS' own extensive experience and sources. Any gaps will be filled by adapting the best information Epic has assembled from clients matching AHS' goals, size and complexity.



Clinicians, leaders and patients contribute to decision making about Connect Care content. Core content includes things like default format for progress notes and Flowsheets applicable across all clinical areas. Specialty content covers topics like how particular procedure reports are formatted.

CSD decisions about core content are mostly referred to Content & Standards, Clinical Decision Support, Clinical Documentation, Clinical Improvement Support committees and Nursing and Allied Health Content and Standards workgroups.

For specialty content, CSD decision making is the responsibility of Connect Care Area Councils. The councils draw upon diverse subject matter experts, clinical documentation workgroups and CKCM methods experts.

### **Will family physicians get to use Connect Care?**

AHS recognizes the need for information sharing with community practitioners. We are currently working with Alberta Health to determine the best way provide a bridge between community practitioners and the information in the Connect Care CIS.

### **Does Connect Care replace eCLINICIAN?**

Yes, eCLINICIAN will be replaced by Epic Ambulatory 2018 which is one part of Connect Care. eClinician currently operates on Epic Ambulatory 2014.

### **Do other provinces use similar systems? Would we be able to connect with other systems in the future?**

Some other Canadian sites use Epic Systems. However, the health information of Albertans will not be routinely shared with other provinces through the Connect Care CIS. Access to patient health information is governed according to AHS' obligations under the Health Information Act. If Albertans are seeking care in another province, the patient portal will be one way for them to source and share health information. This work continues to evolve and forms an important part of the Design and Build process for Connect Care.

Through the system design, AHS is working to ensure we incorporate international data standards into the system. This will enable us to share our health system and patient outcome data with other health authorities or jurisdictions.

## **The Process**

### **How are you getting feedback from end users?**

AHS staff, physicians, volunteers and patient advisors from across Alberta are actively involved in the Connect Care project. More than 2,400 representatives from these groups are taking part in sessions as part of the Design and Build phases of the project, where they are making decisions about how Connect Care will work and what it will do. In addition, all of these groups are involved in the committees, councils, advisory groups and subcommittees that are shaping Connect Care.

### **Are patients being involved in the design of Connect Care?**

Yes. AHS has a team of volunteer Patient and Family Advisors who work with us to ensure patient and family voices are heard. Advisors from all five zones are involved in Connect Care in several ways, including as participants in the project's Patient & Family Advisory Committee, in our Direction Setting and Adoption/Validation sessions, and by offering their unique perspective in areas such as chronic disease management, cancer care, patient access and more.



### **How will you make sure all of our patient information is in the system and accurate before launch?**

We are developing a data conversion strategy that will guide how clinical information is transferred from existing AHS clinical information systems to the Connect Care CIS. It will help answer questions such as “What information will we convert?” “What are the boundaries of the information?” “What systems will the information come from?” and “How will the information be converted?”

Clinical information will be prioritized based on its clinical value and quality. For example, the focus will be on information that will add value to delivery of care and patient experience or operational continuity. It will also be prioritized based on how long conversion will take.

The strategy will not include research information, which will be handled separately. Any information that is not integrated into the Connect Care CIS will continue to be available to physicians and staff. Regular updates will be shared as this work evolves.

### **When will all the sites have wireless Internet?**

We are working on extending existing WiFi (wireless network) coverage so AHS staff and physicians can wirelessly access the secure AHS network using mobile devices such as smartphones, laptops or tablets.

WiFi is being implemented in facilities across the province in a phased approach, aligned to Connect Care implementation waves. The goal is to have WiFi in place six months before Connect Care launches.

### **Will we have enough computers to do our work in the new system?**

We will make sure each facility receives the needed devices before it begins using Connect Care. Devices may include workstations, barcode scanners, and eSignature tablets. Network and power cabling and wall-mount installations will also be deployed where applicable.

### **How will you make sure our clinical devices work with the new system?**

Work is underway to determine which of AHS’ 140,000+ clinical devices will need to be linked to Connect Care. Decisions will be based on patient care needs, vendor recommendations, technical capabilities and funding requirements.

### **Where will all the Connect Care information be stored?**

AHS will store information in a provincial data centre, which has ample capacity for the recommended computing and storage equipment that Connect Care will need. All patient information will be controlled by AHS and stored in Alberta.

## **Patients**

### **How will Connect Care affect patients?**

Connect Care means that a patient’s medical information with AHS will be available online to them as well as their entire healthcare team. It will mean they aren’t asked to repeat their history as often as they are now, and will make their care journey clearer. It will enable electronic communication with their care team and support them to take an active role in their health. It’s a significant investment to improve the healthcare of Albertans.



### **How will patient information be protected?**

In accordance with the Health Information Act, access to patient information is limited to those who are authorized to do so, such as members of your care team. That will not change.

All the work we do at Alberta Health Services is in compliance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Health Information Act. So protecting our patients and staff information isn't just the right thing to do, it's also the law. When we create, implement or update any clinical system, we are governed by these security principles and policies. We will continue to work closely with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta to ensure any new systems at AHS comply with privacy legislation and acts.

Connect Care will offer privacy protection consistent with AHS' other large clinical systems, including comprehensive auditing and monitoring capabilities.

By reducing the number of clinical information systems we use, we reduce the number of security risks we are exposed to and can focus our security initiatives on fewer systems.

### **Will there be a way to address patient concerns about sensitive information being viewed by other healthcare providers?**

There are many specific situations where particularly confidential information is shared with care providers, but patients do not want the information to be broadly accessible. In these circumstances, Connect Care will have the ability to "mask" or restrict who can view specific information.

All access to any type of information will be recorded electronically and can be audited. Patients will also have the opportunity to learn who has looked at their record.

### **How will patients learn about the new system?**

Some information for patients and families is already available at [www.ahs.ca/connectcare](http://www.ahs.ca/connectcare).

As we get closer to launch, a communication campaign will let Albertans know more about the new system, how to use it and how it will improve their care.

### **Who owns the health information collected in a CIS?**

Albertans own their own health information and will have access to their information under this program.

Health service providers throughout Alberta, including Alberta Health Services, must protect the privacy and security of that information when shared in a clinical information system. Healthcare providers are all responsible for using health information for supporting patient care and maintaining a high standard of patient privacy.

### **What should I tell patients who have questions I can't answer?**

There is a section dedicated to patients and families at [www.ahs.ca/connectcare](http://www.ahs.ca/connectcare). It will be updated as new information becomes available. You can also send any questions to [connectcare@ahs.ca](mailto:connectcare@ahs.ca).

