



MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

A twice-weekly update for medical staff

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Medical Staff Digests are sent out every Tuesday and Thursday.

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COVID-19

NH's COVID-19 resources

For more COVID-19 information, see these OurNH pages:

- [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
- [Pandemic Recovery Toolkit](#)
- [Physician website](#)

COVID-19 case counts and statements

Confirmed NH cases since the beginning of the pandemic, according to the **October 19 provincial update**:

- **355** cases
 - **14** active
 - **0** new
- **3** deaths (**0** new)

As always, it is important that we remain vigilant in our communities.

For the latest provincial numbers, please refer to the [BC COVID-19 dashboard](#), which is updated Monday-Friday. The dashboard may not work in all browsers; Chrome is suggested. Surveillance reports for COVID-19, which includes breakdown of cases by Health Service Delivery Area, are [posted every Thursday on the BCCDC website](#).

- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – October 19, 2020
- [BCCDC Surveillance report](#) – October 15, 2020

Respiratory testing addition: BioFire® array

Northern Health Laboratory Services has validated an additional PCR platform to augment in-house respiratory testing. BioFire® technology has been implemented at Fort St. John Hospital, Mills Memorial Hospital, and UHNBC. This will increase NH testing capacity by approximately 48%. These three sites have a combined ability to perform approximately 140 tests daily.

Nasopharyngeal swabs are the sample type for this assay; therefore, **YOCON** and **Copan** viral swabs and **Starplex** multirans swabs are the only acceptable specimen. Please remove current stocks of APTIMA swabs as soon as possible. Incorrect swab types will delay test results as recollection or redirected testing will be required.

Testing is performed by laboratory microbiology departments during **routine** operational hours. Refer to your local testing site for details. If there are exceptional circumstances, requests for a STAT COVID-19 test can be considered in consultation with a pathologist.

For more information, see the [full memo](#).

Releasing information about community-level COVID-19 cases

In BC, everyone is entitled to have their personal health information kept confidential. Health authorities and public health officials are bound by strict privacy measures and legislation. Releasing information on the timing and location of confirmed cases may be sufficient to indirectly identify a case, even if names are not released.

When privacy is breached, the individual's rights are compromised, and they may suffer from stigmatization. When people see that others' privacy has been breached, they may be reluctant to seek testing themselves. Unfortunately, this has already been observed many times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ongoing efforts to maintain public trust in the confidentiality of test results is essential to controlling this pandemic.

There are, however, instances where this information may be shared on a limited, need-to-know basis. For example:

- If there is a significant increase in case numbers in a community or in a specific population group, which requires additional health care measures beyond usual public health and infection control measures, specific health care leaders are notified on a need-to-know basis.
- If there is an event that exposes numerous members of the public, and the Medical Health Officer determines that a public announcement may be necessary for contact identification purposes, a public exposure alert is issued. These alerts are published on [Northern Health's Public exposures and outbreaks site](#).

Finally, school exposure events and declared outbreaks are also routinely made available on [Northern Health's Public exposures and outbreaks site](#), even when there is not a significant risk to the public. As these events are already disclosed to external partners, this is likely to reduce misinformation.

COVID-19 Cases in Northern BC: What do the Dashboard and Maps mean?

The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) provides daily, weekly and monthly information about COVID-19 cases on the [BC COVID-19 Data page](#). Here's a breakdown of what those updates are and what they mean to you.

Daily: The [Dashboard](#) provides Health Authority level data on new cases, active cases, hospitalizations, deaths, recoveries, and testing. It is updated Monday-Thursday at 4:30pm.

Weekly: Every Thursday the BCCDC posts an update of cases from January 1 to present by Health Service Delivery Area. In Northern Health, numbers are available for the Northwest, Northeast, and Northern Interior. This map shows the total number of cases in the area to date, **not** the number of currently active cases.

BCCDC also releases a weekly surveillance report that shows the curve of cases in BC since January, as well as age demographics of cases, the likely source of infection, and comparisons of BC to Canada and other countries. [October 15, 2020 Surveillance Report](#).

Monthly: BCCDC has started to compile and release information at a smaller geographic level because the case counts have increased and the risk of identification has decreased. There are 17 Local Health Areas in the Northern Health region. [This map](#) shows the total number of lab-confirmed cases in the area to date, **not** the number of currently active cases.

Trusted links and resources for COVID-19

- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [HealthLink BC COVID-19 page](#)
- [WHO FAQ](#)
- [Health Canada FAQ](#)
- [COVID-19 content in other languages](#)
- WorkSafe BC - [COVID-19 information and resources](#)
- Northern Health COVID-19 Online Clinic & Information Line: **1-844-645-7811**
- Northern Health Environmental Health Officer Line: **1-250-565-7322**
- **Non-medical info:** call **1-888-COVID19 / 1-888-268-4319** 7 days, 7:30 am - 8 pm

For current information on restrictions on travel, gatherings and other issues, see the [Provincial Health Officer's COVID-19 webpage](#).

Overdose prevention and response

People who use drugs alone are at higher risk of overdosing

With social distancing measures in place due to COVID-19, more people are using substances alone at home. People who use drugs alone are at higher risk of overdosing. Here are some tips to stay safer:

- Most overdoses are happening in people's homes. If you think someone you care about is using substances, check in on them. You could save a life.
- If you are going to use drugs, use with a buddy or at an overdose prevention site. If you choose to use alone, get someone to look in on you and call for help if needed.
- Carry naloxone and get training on how to use it so you can be prepared if an overdose happens.
- Download the free Lifeguard app (<https://lifeguarddh.com/>) to connect you with an emergency contact number in case of an overdose.
 - The app is equipped with a 1 minute timer. If you are not able to turn off the timer after 1 minute, the app will contact emergency services and tell them your current location.

Other organizational news

Staff wellness and more

Resources for staff wellness are available in the right hand sidebar under the heading "Resources for stress and emotional support" on both the [COVID-19 page](#) and the [Pandemic Recovery Toolkit page](#) of Northern Health's staff intranet, OurNH.

For more information on [staff deals](#), the [NH Community Corner](#), and [RAARs](#), visit [OurNH](#).