



MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

A twice-weekly update for medical staff

January 7, 2021

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COVID-19

NH's COVID-19 resources

- On the NH physician website:
 - [COVID-19 information and resources](#)
- On OurNH:
 - [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
 - [Pandemic Recovery Toolkit](#)

COVID-19 case counts and statements

As of January 6, **2,274** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **426**
- New cases: **43**
- Currently in hospital: **39**
 - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **15**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **32**

For the latest provincial numbers, see the [BC COVID-19 dashboard](#), which is updated Monday-Friday. The dashboard may not work in all browsers; Chrome is suggested. Situation reports, including a breakdown of cases by HSDA, are [posted each Friday by the BCCDC](#).

- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – January 6, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – December 18, 2020

Northern Health's vaccine rollout strategy to be released soon

More information on vaccines will be coming shortly, including the release of a full plan next week. For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, vaccine research, priority populations, and the provincial rollout plan, visit the Government of British Columbia's [COVID-19 Vaccines website](#).

Changes to Public Health COVID-19 case and contact management

The recent surge in lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Northern Health region has put pressure on Public Health case and contact management (contact tracing) resources. The backlog of people who have tested positive for COVID-19, but have not yet been contacted by Public Health, has improved greatly since [December 17, 2020](#). To address these challenges, Northern Health has:

- Deployed additional staff to case and contact management teams
- Refined and streamlined processes to ensure efficiency in case notification, monitoring, and discharge from self-isolation.
- Collaborated with primary care providers with regards to clinical health monitoring and clinical management of patients who are COVID-19 positive

Primary care providers will receive notification of their patients who test COVID-19-positive through EMR to EMR, or EMR to fax.

We're asking primary care providers to:

- Continue to refer patients for testing according to BCCDC guidelines and inform patients of positive results.
- Complete clinical health monitoring and clinical management of attached COVID-19 positive patients.
 - Primary care providers will determine the frequency and process appropriate for the patient.
 - There is no expectation that any report of clinical health monitoring be provided to Public Health.

For more information, read the [full memo](#) and [FAQ document](#).

New COVID-19 resources from BC Guidelines for physicians

The BC Guidelines team has multiple new/revised publications on their website:

New Guidance from the BC Centre for Disease Control and the BC Ministry of Health:

- [Guidance for Primary Care Management of Adult Patients with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#)

New Guidance Tool from the BC Centre for Disease Control and the BC Ministry of Health:

- [BC Care Bundle for Supporting High-Risk Patients During COVID-19 Pandemic and Influenza Season](#)

BC Guidelines publications from late 2019 and 2020 (revisions and new guidelines):

- [Appropriate Imaging for Common Situations in Primary and Emergency Care](#)

- [Hypertension– Diagnosis and Management](#)
- [Prostate Cancer Part 1: Diagnosis and Referral in Primary Care](#)
- [Prostate Cancer Part 2: Follow-up in Primary Care](#)
- [Workup of Microscopic Hematuria](#)
- [Urinary Tract Infections in the Primary Care Setting – Investigation](#)
- [CT Prioritization](#)
- [MRI Prioritization](#)

For more information, visit www.bcguidelines.ca.

Job Aid: Receiving COVID-19 cases in morgue (suspect and confirmed)

The purpose of this [document](#) is to provide provincial guidance to ensure the safety of workers handling COVID-19-suspected or -positive decedents. It also informs standardized operating procedures and address specific COVID-19 considerations with respect to the care of the body after death.

Because the decedent's COVID-19 status and details may not include complete, reliable information, **ALL** bodies must be handled diligently using the precautions outlined.

New NH COVID-19 “9-1-1” Long-term care transfer algorithm

There's a new [NH COVID-19 '9-1-1' Long Term Care Transfer Algorithm](#).

The new algorithm includes the [NH Initial Infection Control Procedure for Symptoms of Novel Coronavirus](#) (page 10) and the [NH SBAR](#).

Northern Health Virtual Clinic: Data on patient visits

The Northern Health Virtual Clinic supports after-hours access to COVID-19 and primary care services for those who cannot easily access these services in their communities. The goal is to connect people to their local primary care home wherever possible. We will share Virtual Clinic data with you twice a week.

Monday, Jan 4

- 297 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 27 primary care provider appointments (5 primary care from Terrace, Fort St. John, and Greenville and 22 COVID-19 related)

Tuesday, Jan 5

- 233 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 36 primary care provider appointments (3 primary care from Prince George and Houston and 33 COVID-19 related)

Wednesday Jan 6

- 261 COVID-19 nursing assessments

- 39 primary care provider appointments (12 primary care from Halfway River, Prince George, Kitimat, Pouce Coupe, Fort St. John, Fort St. James, and Hazelton, and 27 COVID-19 related)

New order from Bonnie Henry on industrial camps aims to slow the rate of workers' return

On December 29, 2020, Dr. Bonnie Henry issued the [Industrial Projects Restart Order](#) to large-scale industrial projects in the NH region; specifically, Coastal Gas Link (CGL), Liquefied Natural Gas Canada (LNGC), BC Hydro Site C, Trans Mountain Pipeline (TMX), and Rio Tinto Kemano (RTK).

Most projects had a routine winter break scheduled at the end of December. This provided the opportunity to break the cycle of COVID-19 transmission in many of these project sites.

A rapid return to full operating capacity in the industrial projects after the winter break would create the risk of more outbreaks. The new order seeks to slow the rate of return of workers in January.

The order was developed collaboratively by the Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources; the Ministry of Health; the projects themselves; the Office of the Provincial Health Officer; and Northern Health. It supports projects to increase staffing levels in two steps after their winter break and before February.

For full details, see the [Industrial Projects Restart Order](#).

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

Alert: Illicit Benzodiazepines (“Benzos”) continue to contaminate street drugs

Illicit Benzodiazepines, known as “Benzos”, are contaminating street drugs and continue to circulate in the NH region. Benzos are a type of medication that “depresses” or slows down

your brain activity. When benzos are mixed with opioids (down) there is a higher risk of overdose. Individuals who have overdosed using drugs contaminated with benzos may be difficult to rouse and slow to respond to naloxone.

More information:

- Northern Health Overdose Alert: [Overdose Emergency Information](#)
- Provincial Overdose Alert: [Toward the Heart](#)
- Harm reduction information in the context of COVID-19: [BCCDC](#)

Other organizational news

Wellness and more

Resources for wellness are available on the [Health and Wellness page](#) of the Physicians Website. For more information on [staff deals](#), the [NH Community Corner](#), and [RAARs](#), visit [OurNH](#).