

Date:	February 3, 2021
To:	Northern Health staff and medical staff
From:	Northern Health EOC
RE:	COVID-19 vaccine deferral among recent lab-confirmed cases

There is now good evidence that people who have had COVID-19 infection have a significant degree of short-term immunity, for at least three months. During this period, re-infection is rare, so the COVID-19 vaccine provides much less protection than it would provide to a person who has not had COVID-19 in the previous three months.

Therefore, going forward, **Northern Health will be deferring COVID-19 vaccination in individuals who have had a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection**, until three months have passed from the initial infection (starting from the symptom onset date, or from the test date if the person had no symptoms).

This also applies to people who have already had a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. If such a person has had COVID-19 infection, the second dose will be deferred until three months following the infection.

By freeing up vaccine doses in the short term, this deferral enables us to vaccinate more people who have no immunity at all, in the current circumstances of very limited vaccine supply.

This practice is already in place in other regional health authorities, and has been endorsed by the BC Provincial Health Officer, the BC Centre for Disease Control, and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

This is not a permanent deferral. Individuals with previous COVID-19 infection will be offered vaccine once the three-month deferral period has elapsed, according to the established priority groups and logistics of vaccine delivery.

References:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html#a7>

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/resources-for-health-professionals>