



MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

A twice-weekly update for medical staff

February 23, 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 February 22, **4,351** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **299**
- New cases: **23**
- Currently in hospital: **39**
 - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **13**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **104**

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.

As well, see the [COVID-19 Epidemiology app](#), which visualizes COVID-19 in BC in comparison to other Canadian and global jurisdictions, at the HSDA level. It's updated on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – February 22, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – February 17, 2021

The COVID-19 vaccines were developed so quickly – are we sure they're safe?

Yes. It's much safer to get the vaccine than to get COVID-19. The vaccine was developed quickly, but no corners were cut, and all the correct processes were followed to ensure the vaccine is safe for Canadians.

Get the answers to this and other common vaccine questions on the "[Facts about COVID-19 vaccines](#)" 11 x 17" poster on Northern Health's [COVID-19 vaccine plan](#) page – feel free to share!

Enforcement information: New resource for communities

A new document on northernhealth.ca, [Enforcement information for Communities](#), provides important information on:

- The leadership role of the Provincial Health Officer
- How to respond if people in a community aren't following provincial health orders
- The role of compliance and enforcement officers
- And more!

New BCCDC guidance: Maternal and newborn acute care discharge planning and continued care in community settings during the COVID-19 pandemic

- New guidance intended for health care providers of maternal and newborn care who are involved in discharge planning from acute care sites and providing continued care in community settings
- Includes newborn screening and newborn teaching utilizing usual Perinatal Services BC and BCCDC resources, forms and pathways (for all newborns and COVID-19-suspect/confirmed)
- Includes maternal screening, procedures and postpartum teaching utilizing usual Perinatal Services BC and BCCDC resources, forms and pathways (for all mothers/individuals and COVID-19-suspect/confirmed)
- Follow-up after discharge for all mothers/individuals and newborns by primary care providers and community health services, inclusive of suspect, confirmed or contact dyads

For more, see these links on the BCCDC site:

- PDF: [Maternal and Newborn Acute Care Discharge Planning and Continued Care in Community Settings During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- Web page: [Newborns](#)

Eye protection an important part of PPE

The BCCDC recommends that all health care workers and support employees who have direct contact with patients or whose work requires close proximity to patients (less than 2 metres) wear eye protection.

Recently, PPE guidelines for eye protection were updated to limit acceptable eye protection to either face shields or goggles. This decision was based on direction from the Public Health Agency of Canada that using faceshields and goggles reduces the chances of droplet transmission because there is more coverage and fewer gaps around the eyes than with standard safety glasses.

Tips for using eye protection to reduce the transmission of COVID-19:

- Eye protection should be worn throughout the shift, doffing only for breaks or when cleaning.
- Clean every time eye protection is removed, at the end of shift, or when soiled.
- Do not place eye protection up on your forehead or around your neck.
- Once eye protection is doffed, follow the [BCCDC cleaning and disinfecting instructions for eye/facial protection](#).

Double-masking not recommended for health care workers

Recently there has been increasing media attention on the recommendation for people to wear two masks to improve fit and filtration. This recommendation is for the general public, who may be wearing low-quality or homemade masks, not for health care workers. All staff in health care facilities should wear one medical mask. Double-masking is never recommended.

Masks provided at NH facilities meet the standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) for filtration and fluid resistance, so double-masking is not required.

Medical masks are not designed to be tight-fitting, and wearing a second mask on top of the first does not improve fit. Wearing a second mask also increases a person's chance of contamination during the donning and doffing process. Masks must never be worn on top of N95 respirators, as they can interfere with the seal of the respirator and reduce the level of protection.

To ensure your mask is providing adequate protection:

- Wear your mask at all times except when eating or drinking. Replace with a new mask when finished.
- Cover your mouth and nose fully with the mask and firmly press the nosepiece, making sure there are no gaps.
- Perform hand hygiene before and after doffing your mask.
- Do not touch the mask while wearing it. If you do, perform hand hygiene.
- Replace the mask if it gets wet or soiled.
- When removing your mask, do not touch the front of the mask. Only touch the ear loops or ties.
- Do not use mask brackets under your mask, as they increase the chance of contamination.

Video from the FNHA: Dr. Nadine Caron on COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy

“I completely understand the questions being asked, the hesitancy,” says Dr. Caron. “But at the same time, while I share some of the concerns, I myself am excited to get the vaccine.”

Check out the video (just over 1 minute long) on the FNHA’s Facebook page: [Do you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine? Talk to a health professional you trust](#)

Current guidance on COVID-19, physical activity, and sport participation for school-aged children and youth

[This BCCDC document](#) highlights:

- The importance of physical activity to healthy growth and development
- The impact that COVID-19 has had on already dire levels of participation in sport and physical activity
- Resources available to support continued engagement in activity throughout the pandemic
- Considerations regarding being physically active with or while recovering from COVID-19.

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.

Thursday, Feb 18

- 261 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 34 primary care provider appointments (9 primary care from Prince George, Quesnel, Prince Rupert, and Fort Fraser, and 25 COVID-19 related)

Friday, Feb 19

- 187 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 28 primary care provider appointments (19 primary care from Quesnel, Masset, Fort St. John, Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Taylor, and Gitsegukla, and 9 COVID-19 related)

Saturday, Feb 20

- 153 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 17 primary care provider appointments (13 primary care from Prince George, Smithers, Chetwynd, Quesnel, Prince Rupert, Taylor, Fort Nelson, and Dawson Creek and 4 COVID-19 related)

Sunday, Feb 21

- 147 COVID-19 nursing assessments

- 9 primary care provider appointments (6 primary care from Prince George, Terrace, Smithers, Fort St. John, and 3 COVID-19 related)

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

Reflecting on the overdose crisis in 2020

As the five-year anniversary of the province's illicit drug toxicity public health emergency approaches, [the BC Coroners Service reports](#) 2020 was B.C.'s worst year yet in terms of number of lives lost due to the effects of the toxic illicit drugs.

BC had 1,716 deaths due to illicit drugs in 2020, a 74% increase over 2019 (984). The number of deaths in 2020 equates to 4.7 preventable deaths every day, and is two deaths per day higher than in 2019 (2.7). This toxic drug supply has claimed more lives than motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicides, and prescription-drug-related deaths combined.

In Northern Health we must continue working to keep people who use drugs safer. Resources to help staff, clients, and families stay safer:

- [Toward the Heart](#)
- [Stop Overdose BC \(Lifeguard app\)](#)

Other organizational news

Long-term Care/Assisted Living Digest, Issue # 17: Information for residents and families

The long-term care task group is continuing to produce updates twice a month for residents and families of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities.

[This issue](#) provides an update on COVID-19 vaccines and visiting restrictions.

Accreditation Reminder: Required Organizational Practice – Safe Surgery Checklist

Accreditation is an external peer review process that Northern Health uses to assess and improve the services provided to patients and clients based on standards of excellence.

Participation and achievement of national standards of care gives reassurance to the public, patients and families, caregivers and the entire organization that Northern Health is providing high-quality services.

Required Organizational Practices (ROPs) are evidence-informed practices addressing high-priority areas that are essential and that the organization must have in place to enhance patient safety and minimize risk.

The safe surgery checklist is used to confirm that safety steps are completed for a surgical procedure performed in the operating room.

Surgical procedures are increasingly complex and carry a significant risk of potentially avoidable harm. Safe surgery checklists reduce the likelihood of complications following surgery and often improve surgical outcomes.

A safe surgery checklist guides and formalizes communication among the team members and integrates these steps into surgical workflow; before induction of anesthesia (briefing), before skin incision (time out) and before the patient leaves the operating room (debriefing).

See also [Surgical Safety Checklist Policy/Procedure](#) on OurNH.

For more information on all ROPS, see the [ROP Handbook](#).

BC Concurrent Disorders Virtual Conference is March 12

Join us for this free one-day virtual event:

- Friday March 12, 2021
- 8 a.m.-4 p.m. PST
- [Register now!](#)

Join the conversation on how to best help people with a dual diagnosis of severe mental illness and addiction, or a concurrent disorder, at the [B.C. Concurrent Disorders Conference](#).

Hosted by BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, the conference is open to and relevant for any health professionals treating either mental health or substance use patients.

Upcoming webinars for frontline clinicians: Informed Decision-Making (March 9) and Health Literacy (March 24)

Informed Decision-Making

This workshop is designed for frontline clinicians who are involved in diagnostic or treatment decisions. It focuses on skills needed to create successful partnerships that support patients in

making decisions consistent with their desire to be involved, and the values that influence those decisions. The practical skills taught in this workshop are using Ask-Tell-Ask to give information and advice and using the BRAIN worksheet to support informed decision-making.

- **Date:** March 9, 2021
- **Time:** 12:30- 4:00 PM PST
- [Contact us](#) for more information about registration.

Health Literacy

This workshop provides training in fundamental concepts from the health literacy universal precautions and teaches core skills, including how to use resources, plain language, teach-back, and Ask-Tell-Ask. It can also be adapted into a package that may include webinars, online modules, and homework assignments.

- **Date:** March 24, 2021
- **Time:** 9:00 AM - 12:30 pm PST
- [Contact us](#) for more information on how to arrange for your group to take this course.

Upcoming Workshop: Person and Family Voice in Quality Improvement - March 17 and 23

Providing person-and family-centred health care means including the patient or client's voice in real and substantial ways. This workshop teaches how to think effectively about, plan for, and succeed at engaging people and families for practice improvement. Learners will draft a concrete plan for an engagement in their setting.

Learners should come with an engagement project in mind to explore through the webinar series (Examples of possible projects: wishing to engage seniors around clinic services or seeking to engage people with lived experience of drug use about community services).

- **Date:** March 17 & 23, 2021. Participants must commit to attending both sessions.
- **Time:** 12:00 pm PST
- [Contact us](#) for more information about registration.

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](#).