



# MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

*A twice-weekly update for medical staff*

**March 2, 2021**

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## COVID-19

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### 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 March 1, **4,625** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **303**
- New cases: **21**
- Currently in hospital: **29**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **13**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **106**

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](#) – March 1, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – February 24, 2021

## Phase 2 COVID-19 immunization plan update

The Province of BC has released more information about Phase 2 of the COVID-19 immunization plan, which focuses on protecting our seniors and Elders.

Beginning March 8, 2021, seniors aged 80 and older, and Indigenous peoples aged 65 and older, who are not living in independent or seniors' supportive housing can call to book their appointment according to a staggered schedule.

There is no requirement to register before booking, and immunization clinic locations will be confirmed at the time of booking, with vaccinations starting as early as March 15, 2021.

Contact information, hours, and call-in schedules for the Northern Health region, as well as step-by-step instructions on how to call to book an appointment for yourself or a loved one, will be available on March 8, 2021, through [www.gov.bc.ca/bcseniorsfirst](http://www.gov.bc.ca/bcseniorsfirst), and on the [Northern Health website](#).

For more information, see the [full article on the NH stories site](#) and the [Government of B.C. news release](#).

## COVID-19 vaccine second dose delayed to 16 weeks after first dose

The province is delaying the delivery of second dose to 16 weeks after first dose. As a result, Northern Health will be delaying all Dose 2 immunizations and clinics as of today, March 1, 2021. The second dose will be provided 16 weeks following the first dose and clinics will be organized to accommodate this new time frame.

### Is it safe for my second dose to be delayed?

Yes, Health Canada supports a longer delay between first and second doses. Many countries have delayed second doses and found that people still have a strong immune response against COVID-19.

### Am I protected by one dose?

Studies around the world are showing that even one dose of COVID-19 vaccine provides very good protection against transmission of COVID-19 and serious illness.

This change will help ensure that the maximum number of British Columbians are able to receive their first dose of immunization.

## Discontinuing COVID-19 Precautions for Admitted Patients in Acute Care

Determining when to discontinue COVID-19 precautions for admitted patients in acute care is important for patient and staff safety.

A [process/algorithm has been developed](#) to support staff and physicians. In this process, discharge from acute care is not dependent on a patient meeting the criteria for discontinuing COVID-19 precautions. Rather, discharge is based on clinical assessment and patients can complete their isolation period at home if they are well enough to be discharged from acute care.

The Infection Prevention and Control team plays a key role in the decision to discontinue COVID-19 precautions. Public Health staff will continue to provide isolation dates to those discharged from the hospital. A process is in development for acute care to notify public health of COVID patients being discharged from hospital. Public health can then contact patients and advise on precautions post-discharge.

Finally, a reminder that a test-based strategy is no longer recommended for decision-making on discontinuing precautions as patients continue to have positive tests due to shedding of non-viable viral RNA that persists for weeks to months. Given that, repeat testing of previously positive patients is generally **not recommended** for up to 3 months post original diagnosis as it would not indicate acute infection or infectiousness. Physicians with case specific questions are encouraged to consult Infectious Disease, Laboratory Medicine or a Medical Health Officer.

### Does the COVID-19 vaccine have side effects?

Side effects are common. They might include soreness, redness, and swelling at the spot where you got the injection; tiredness, headache, fever, chills, muscle or joint soreness; and nausea and vomiting. These reactions are mild and usually last 1 to 2 days. However, some vaccine recipients may develop soreness and redness at the injection site 5-9 days after receiving the vaccine.

Anaphylactic reactions are rare. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue, or lips.

This is why we ask you to wait 15 minutes before leaving, after any vaccinations.

### 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.

Thursday, Feb 25

- 200 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 22 primary care provider appointments (13 primary care from Prince George, Fort St. John, Terrace, Prince Rupert, Skidegate, and Quesnel, and 9 COVID-19 related)

Friday, Feb 26

- 147 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 16 primary care provider appointments (11 primary care from Quesnel, Prince Rupert, Fort St. John, Prince George, and Terrace, and 5 COVID-19 related)

Saturday, Feb 27

- 162 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 15 primary care provider appointments (13 primary care from Terrace, Prince George, Fort St. John, Masset, Chetwynd, Prince Rupert, and Fort Nelson, and 2 COVID-19 related)

Sunday, Feb 28

- 141 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 12 primary care provider appointments (12 primary care from Prince Rupert, Prince George, Terrace, Smithers, Fort St. John, Kitwanga, Hazelton, Dawson Creek, Fort St. James)

### **Sign up for free COVID-19 Ventilator training now available until April 1, 2020 - BCITs: Focused Education Preparation Advancing for Frontline RN**

The course is specifically directed at RNs and other health care providers caring for patients requiring telemetry monitoring, high acuity care, and critical care including mechanical ventilation.

The course has five modules which are accessible anytime and can be repeated as often as required. Each module includes a self-assessment to assess your current knowledge, educational content including interactive activities, printable resources and quick guides, as well as COVID-19 specific information for each content area. Two of the modules include virtually simulated patient cases designed to consolidate your knowledge. You will receive a certificate of participation after each module you complete.

**This course is being offered until April 1, 2021.**

[Register today!](#)

### **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

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### **New Treatment Approaches in the Opioid Crisis – RN/RPN Prescribing**

In September 2020, the Provincial Health Officer [issued an order](#) that allows nurses to prescribe medication to treat Opioid Use Disorder as part of the escalating response to the ongoing opioid overdose crisis.

Initially, this expanded scope for nurses is being applied to the medication Suboxone, with more treatments to be incorporated at a later date. Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses can be nominated by their Health Authority to receive this training and work with the expanded scope.

A cohort of Northern nurses are already going through the education process to be able to support patients in their region, with more opportunities for additional nurses to receive this designation coming soon.

If you or your team are interested in being at the forefront of these new advances to nursing scope, please reach out to Nick Rempel at [nick.rempel@northernhealth.ca](mailto:nick.rempel@northernhealth.ca) for more information!

## Other organizational news

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### **Register now for the virtual 2021 Canadian Conference on Physician Leadership**

Registration is now available for the 2021 Canadian Conference on Physician Leadership. This year's conference will be a little different as it's going to be entirely virtual.

The Canadian Society of Physician Leaders puts on this unique conference designed for forward-thinking physician leaders. Join us to meet, discuss, and agree or disagree with fellow colleagues. The CCPL is known for making connections among physician leaders who have similar concerns across their urban, rural, or remote areas of practice

For more information and how to register, see the [full event details](#).

### **New Trans Care BC educational resources available en Français**

The language we use matters and is an important part of creating a health care system that is equitable, accessible and welcoming to all. That's why [Trans Care BC](#) and Francophone Services, part of the [Provincial Language Service](#), have collaborated on the creation of new French versions of some of the [educational resources](#) on the Trans Care BC website.

These resources cover key topics like accessing mental health care and gender-affirming surgery, supporting gender diverse children and youth, and using gender inclusive language.

Take a moment to check these resources out in your preferred language and consider whether you're being inclusive in the language you use to communicate with friends, colleagues and patients:

- Gender Inclusive language
  - [English](#) / [Français](#)
- Making Mistakes... and correcting them
  - [English](#) / [Français](#)
- Supporting Children, Youth, and Families
  - [English](#) / [Français](#)
- Gender-Affirming Parenting Guide
  - [English](#) / [Français](#)
- Accessing Gender-Affirming Surgeries for BC Residents
  - [English](#) / [Français](#)

## **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.

## **Multi-Factor Authentication – register today!**

Microsoft Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) will soon replace Trusted Access to become the single authentication method for: Webmail, i-Site, OurNH, NH Everywhere (VDI), DocuSign, and other digital NH services.

Don't lose offline access to these sites -- [set up Microsoft multi-factor authentication today!](#)

If you have already set up MFA with the Microsoft Authenticator app, you don't need to set it up again. If MFA is not working (e.g., if you got a new phone), please contact the [ITS service desk](#) and ask for your Microsoft MFA to be reset.