



MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

A twice-weekly update for medical staff

March 11, 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 March 10, **4,985** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **275**
- New cases: **32**
- Currently in hospital: **17**
 - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **8**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **110**

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, for a visual comparison of COVID-19 cases in BC by HSDA to other Canadian and global jurisdictions, see the [COVID-19 Epidemiology app](#). It's updated on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – March 10, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – March 10, 2021

Phase 2 COVID-19 immunization plan update – March 8

***** The COVID-19 vaccine rollout is a rapidly evolving situation; this resource may go out of date. If in doubt about content, please check the [Northern Health web](#) for the latest information. *****

As of Monday March 8, eligible seniors are able to (and need to) call to book appointments.

Within Phase 2, different groups will be eligible to receive the vaccine at different times, with the oldest British Columbians becoming eligible first:

- In the North, there are community-by-community variations to when different age groups are able to call to book their appointments, as a result of our smaller populations.
- In some communities, we are taking a whole-community approach to eligibility for booking vaccine appointments. Again, this is due to some of the unique demographic, geographic, and logistical realities in the North.

Everyone living in BC who is eligible to receive the vaccine will be able to get it and nobody will miss their opportunity to be immunized. By the end of July, it is expected that most people in BC will have the opportunity to get the vaccine if they want it. Once you are eligible to receive a vaccine you are always eligible, you will not miss your chance to be vaccinated.

More information about Phase 2 of B.C.'s Immunization Plan:

- BC Government: www.gov.bc.ca/covidvaccine
- Information for Seniors 80+ and Indigenous Peoples 65+: www.gov.bc.ca/bcseniorsfirst
- Northern Health: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/covid-19-vaccine-plan#weekly-plan#nh-resources>

Phase 2 COVID-19 immunization plan FAQ

What is the Northern Health number to call to make a vaccination appointment, or to make an appointment on behalf of a loved one?

- 1-844-255-7555

I can't get through to my health authority call centre?

- Health authority call centres are accepting bookings from people in eligible age categories as of specific dates, starting March 8 and onwards.
- We know some people will experience long hold times and challenges in getting through to a call centre representative.
- **If it's not your turn yet, please do not call in to book an appointment.**

- Everyone who is eligible to book a vaccination appointment will be able to book one. Nobody will miss their chance.

Can I go anywhere to book my appointment online?

- At this time, Northern Health does not yet have an online option; more information will be released when that option becomes available.

I am a senior born in 1941 or earlier, or I am Indigenous and born in 1956 or earlier.

When can I call to book my first dose?

- Vaccine call centres for seniors open March 8, 2021.
- You can book a vaccine appointment for yourself or your spouse.
- You can also have a family member or friend call for you.
- When you call is based on your age – but in many Northern (smaller, remote and Indigenous) communities, appointment and vaccination schedule differ slightly from provincial schedule.

What will a typical phone call look like with my health authority? What are the steps?

- Confirm you are in the age group eligible for booking
- You will be asked for your:
 - Legal name & date of birth
 - Postal code
 - PHN (if you have one)
 - Phone (of person or family/support member)
 - Email (of person or family/support member)
- You will be advised of your nearest clinic location, and together you will choose the timeslot that works for you.
- The call centre agent will confirm your appointment time and location and you will receive a confirmation by text or email if you've provided that contact information.
- Please note to expect that you might wait on hold for some time.

Do I have to call and book my own appointment/what if I'm not able to book my own appointment?

- A family member, caretaker, healthcare worker, advocate or friend can also book an appointment on their behalf. We ask that only one support person call in on behalf of a senior in order to protect our call centres.
- The call-in schedule to book appointments will be staggered to help avoid long waits and system overload.

Will I get an appointment scheduled on the day of calling – or will these be booked based on a call back approach?

- In every health authority, your vaccine appointment will be booked at the time of your phone call.
- Follow-up confirmation will be provided by text or email for those who provide that contact information.

Are supports available?

- If you, or someone you are booking for requires support please mention it while booking your appointment
- Supports will be available to ensure access to immunization, up to and including scheduling home immunization for those with critical transportation or mobility issues

Where will my local vaccine clinic be/where are mass clinics located?

- Appointment locations for people in Phase 2 will be confirmed at the time they book their appointment.
- The full list of Phase 2 clinic locations is available on the Northern Health [COVID-19 Vaccine Plan web page](#).
- The full list of mass clinic locations for **Phase 3** will be shared publicly at a later date.

How were clinic locations chosen in the Northern Health region?

- Northern Health will be using a combination of small, medium and large size clinics located in communities across the region.
- Planning for these clinics is based on population size, diverse populations, geographical considerations, accessibility of the site for seniors, available resources such as adequate wifi, parking, and other efficiencies.
- Phase 2 clinics include venues in more than 30 Northern BC communities; ranging from local health care facilities, to schools and local colleges, and conference and event centres.
- Northern Health thanks each and every community for their help in allowing use of their venues in the planned COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

How were communities chosen for the whole of community approach?

- These communities have been chosen to be vaccinated all at once due to population size, remoteness, accessibility – and these can be expanded to address outbreaks, clusters or high population incidence rates.
- Examples include: Dease Lake, Haida Gwaii, Stewart, Fort Nelson, Granisle.

I have received my first dose – why has my second dose appointment been cancelled?

- There has been a change to the provincial COVID-19 vaccine schedule; Second doses are being postponed until 16 weeks after dose 1.
- The Canadian National Immunization Advisory Committee has concluded that there is a benefit to extending the time between first and second doses to four months.
- The BC Ministry of Health has decided that it is in the best interests of British Columbians to have as many people as possible immunized with one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Immunization Strategy – UPDATE on Student Practice Education and Students Performing COVID Immunization Activities

[A memo](#) was distributed to educational institutions on March 11, 2021 giving an update on student practice education and students performing COVID-19 immunization activities.

Please see the memo for detailed information.

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.

Monday, March 8

- 260 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 26 primary care provider appointments (21 primary care from Smithers, Dawson Creek, Prince George, Fort St. John, Prince Rupert, Kitimat, Chetwynd, Edmonton, and Terrace, and 5 COVID-19 related)

Tuesday, March 9

- 181 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 14 primary care provider appointments (9 primary care from Prince George, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Fort St. John, Burns Lake, and Chetwynd, and 5 COVID-19 related)

Wednesday, March 10

- 170 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 30 primary care provider appointments (19 primary care from Prince George, Fort St. John, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Dawson Creek, Moricetown, Chetwynd, and Smithers, and 11 COVID-19 related)

NEW Long-term Care/Assisted Living Digest – Issue 18: 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 the delay of the second dose for the COVID-19 vaccine and information on phase 2 of the COVID-19 immunization plan.

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

Increased drug toxicity leads to record number of January deaths (BC Coroners Service Data – Released March 2)

On March 2, the BC Coroners Service [released reports](#) on [illicit drug toxicity deaths](#) and [type of drug](#) data for January 2021.

BC Provincial Summary

- There were 165 suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths in January 2021, a 104% increase from January 2020, which represents about 5.3 deaths per day in BC.
- 70% of the deaths were in the 30-59 year age group, and males accounted for 83% of the deaths, which remains consistent.
- The townships experiencing the highest **numbers** of deaths were Vancouver (53) and Surrey (52)
- The highest **rates** in BC were in Northern Health: **71** per 100 000 people. The provincial rate is **38** per 100,000 people. The highest rates by HSDA were: Northeast, Northwest, Vancouver, Northern Interior, and Kootenay Boundary

Northern Health Summary for January 2021

- **NH** had 17 illicit drug toxicity deaths (71 deaths per 100,000 individuals)
- **NW** had 5 illicit drug toxicity deaths for a rate of 78.9 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is the second highest rate in BC. There was 1 death in December 2020.

- **NI** had 7 illicit drug toxicity deaths for a rate of 56.9 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is the fourth highest rate in BC. There were 15 deaths in December 2020. All the deaths occurred in Prince George in January 2021.
- **NE** has seen 5 illicit drug toxicity deaths in January 2021 for a rate of 91.3 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is the **highest rate** in BC. There was 1 death in December 2020

Toxicology Update

- Preliminary data in 2021 has found that fentanyl or its analogues have been detected in 80% of all illicit drug toxicity deaths.
- The detection rate of benzodiazepines has rapidly increased from 15% of samples in July 2020 to 49% of samples in Jan 2021 (BCCDC Etizolam Fact Sheet).

For more information, see the BC Coroners Service [news release](#).

Other organizational news

Microsoft Multi-Factor Authentication Required For i-Site, OurNH, Webmail starting March 17 – Set Up Today

On March 17th Microsoft Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) will replace Trusted Access to become the new multi-factor authentication method for: Webmail, i-Site, OurNH, and other digital NH services in the coming weeks.

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

How to setup Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) for the first time

- Download the Microsoft Authenticator app to your mobile device
 - [iOS users](#)
 - [Android users](#)
- Go to [HealthBC on Microsoft](#)
- Follow instructions in the [step-by-step MFA setup guide](#)

If you've 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.

MFA is only required when accessing these sites off NH networks (i.e. at home or on the go).