



# MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

*A twice-weekly update for medical staff*

**March 30, 2021**

## **Expression of Interest: Primary care physician participation in Northern Health Virtual Clinic**

Northern Health is inviting primary care physicians to indicate their interest in participating in the delivery of primary care services through the Northern Health Virtual Clinic. For information, review the [expression of interest](#). The expression of interest is best viewed on a tablet, computer, or iPhone.

## **Clinical updates**

---

### **AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD rollout paused**

Out of an abundance of caution, the province and BC and NH are pausing the rollout of AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD to all persons under 55 years old per the [NACI rapid response: Recommended use of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in younger adults](#). Please see full details in [this letter from Dr. Jong Kim](#), Chief Medical Health Officer, Northern Health.

### **Doctors of BC Town Hall on Wed., March 31: Get answers to your CEV vaccine rollout questions**

We've heard from many doctors who have questions surrounding government's recent announcement of fast tracking vaccinations for patients considered Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV). What's required of doctors? How does the process work? Which group of doctors was consulted?

If you'd like to find out more, please join Dr Penny Ballem, BC's immunization rollout lead, and Dr Maureen O'Donnell, Executive VP of Clinical Policy, Planning and Partnerships at PHSA:

- [90-minute Town Hall](#)
- Wednesday, March 31
- 6:00 PM PDT

### **[ADD TO CALENDAR](#)**

**Registration for the Town Hall is required**, and can be completed [here](#). This event is available to members only. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Communications & Public Affairs at Doctors of BC:

- [communications@doctorsofbc.ca](mailto:communications@doctorsofbc.ca) 1-800-665-2262

## Missing abnormal flag on “Detected” COVID-19 results

Detected COVID-19 results normally display an “Abnormal” flag. COVID-19 results marked as “Detected” from March 18 to 25, 2021 are missing the abnormal flag.

The recommendation is for providers who use result flags in their workflow for checking results to review their EMR to ensure they are aware of any “Detected” Positive COVID-19 results. Positive COVID-19 results that were received between March 18 to 25, 2021 are missing the abnormal flag.

This incident has no effect on the COVID-19 result. Positive results still display as “Detected”. The system error did not affect the actual result.

The Public Health communicable disease workflow for contact tracing and follow-up is based on the results, not the flag; therefore, patients are not impacted by the missing abnormal flag for positive COVID-19 cases.

For more information, read this [briefing note on missing abnormal flags on “detected” COVID-19 results](#).

## When to administer COVID-19 vaccine to patients on IVIG/SCIG therapy

Wondering about the best time to administer COVID-19 vaccine to patients on monthly/weekly doses of IVIG/SCIG? Please see this [guide](#) for physicians and nurses.

## Northern Health Virtual Clinic to send all assessments to patient’s identified primary care provider

The Northern Health Virtual Clinic is now sending all COVID-19 and primary care assessments from both nurses and providers to the primary care provider identified by the patient. For questions or follow up contact:

- Northern Health Virtual Clinic Operations Hotline: 778-675-5378 **(for provider use only, please do not share with patients)**
- Northern Health Virtual Clinic Fax Number: 250-561-1927

## 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 29, 5,898 cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **340**

- New cases: **34**
- Currently in hospital: **30**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **12**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **120**

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 29, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – March 24, 2021

### Update on COVID-19 vaccination clinic consent process

Health care professionals have a professional and legal responsibility to obtain informed consent prior to immunizations.

The COVID-19 vaccine clinic process:

- Every person booking an appointment will be directed to read the online [Healthfile](#). The Healthfile will be available at the immunization clinic.
- At the appointment, the client will self-complete the [COVID-19 Immunization Screening Checklist](#). The clinic Educator or Patient Assessment clinician (regulated health care providers) will provide assistance, as needed:
  - To support client completion of the Screening Checklist when required.
  - To answer any questions related to the Screening Checklist or Healthfile.
  - To review Screening Checklist and perform further assessment when required.
- The client's ability to complete the checklist, with or without assistance from Educator/ Patient Assessment clinician, assesses their capability and understanding.
- Following the screening assessment, the client will be directed to the immunizer.
- The immunizer will not need to verify consent with the client. At this stage, consent is implied based on the client's actions (rolling up their sleeve and presenting their arm).

Read the full [practice update](#) for more information.

### Revisions to eye protection guidelines

When the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) updated the eye protection guidelines to recommend the use of face shields or goggles to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in health care, NH revised our Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidelines to remove the use of safety glasses as acceptable eye protection.

Since this change was made, some staff have identified issues with using the face shields and goggles, including vision problems, health issues (e.g., headaches), and safety

concerns. In response to these concerns, NH has done a further review of our PPE guidelines and made the following revisions:

- Face shields and goggles remain the recommended eye protection to prevent transmission of COVID-19.
- In low-risk areas where the use of face shields or goggles causes vision, health or safety concerns, safety glasses or the combination mask with visor can be used.
- Face shields or goggles are still required in high-risk areas such as ICU, and Emergency, providing care to known or suspected COVID patients, and COVID swabbing.

Please refer to NH's [Eye Protection Guidelines](#) to determine the appropriate level eye protection based on a point-of-care risk assessment.

### **Stay Active, Stay Safe: Physical activity resources and recommendations for older adults during COVID-19**

Staying active is critical for healthy aging and maintaining overall well-being. Doctors of BC have pulled together trusted resources and tips to create [this information sheet](#) designed to help older adults stay active, healthy, and safe during the pandemic.

### **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 22**

- 256 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 50 primary care provider appointments (34 primary care from Prince Rupert, Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Kitimat, Bear Lake, Chetwynd, Quesnel, Hythe (AB), Moberly Lake, and Port Clements, and 16 COVID-19 related)

#### **Tuesday, March 23**

- 192 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 33 primary care provider appointments (22 primary care from Fort St John, Terrace, Calgary (staying in Valemount), Prince George, Kispiox, Prince Rupert, and Fort Nelson, and 11 COVID-19 related)

#### **Wednesday, March 24**

- 241 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 30 primary care provider appointments (30 primary care from Prince George, Fort St. John, Prince Rupert, Kitwanga, Fort St. James, Quesnel, Moberly Lake, Terrace, and Fort Nelson)

#### **Thursday, March 25**

- 208 COVID-19 nursing assessments

- 29 primary care provider appointments (28 primary care from Prince Rupert, Chetwynd, Smithers, Fort St. John, Prince George, Quesnel, Fort Nelson, Terrace, Red Deer, Houston, and Kitimat, and 1 COVID-19 related)

**Friday, March 26**

- 214 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 32 primary care provider appointments (31 primary care from Prince George, Terrace, Masset, Fort St. John, Hudson's Hope, Quesnel, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson, Thornhill, Prince Rupert, Kitimat, Sooke, and Smithers, and 1 COVID-19 related)

**Saturday, March 27**

- 116 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 18 primary care provider appointments (16 primary care from Smithers, Prince Rupert, Prince George, Fort St. John, Quesnel, Hudson's Hope, Dawson Creek, Terrace, and Pouce Coupe, and 2 COVID-19 related)

**Sunday, March 28**

- 151 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 19 primary care provider appointments (14 primary care from Prince George, Quesnel, Prince Rupert, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, and 5 COVID-19 related)

**Monday, March 29**

- 228 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 29 primary care provider appointments (29 primary care from Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Moberly Lake, Prince George, Chetwynd, Smithers, Grande Prairie, Terrace, Fort Nelson, Rolla, Prince Rupert, and McBride)

## 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

### Illicit drug toxicity deaths up to February 2021 now available: BC Coroners Report released

On March 24, the BC Coroners Service released its latest [report on BC's illicit drug toxicity deaths, January 1 to February 28, 2021](#).

### Provincial Summary

February 2021 (N=155) saw a 107% increase in the number of deaths from February 2020 (N=75)

- This is the largest number of suspected deaths ever in the month of February.
- In February, VCH and FH had the highest **number** of deaths.
- NH had the highest **rate** of illicit drug toxicity deaths in the province with a rate of 58.1 deaths per 100,000 individuals in 2021.

### Northern Health Summary

- NH had eight illicit drug toxicity deaths in February (~35 deaths per 100,000 individuals)
- All three HSDAs are in the top five in the province for **rate** of illicit drug toxicity deaths, with the NE being the highest.
  - **NW** recorded eight illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 63.1 deaths per 100,000 individuals, which is the third lowest in the province.
    - There was one death in February.
  - **NI** recorded 12 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 48.8 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is the third highest rate in BC.
    - There were four deaths in February.
      - The City of Prince George had nine deaths in 2021.
    - **NE** recorded eight illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 73.0 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is the second highest rate in BC.
      - There were three deaths in February.
        - The City of Dawson Creek recorded five deaths in 2021.

For more information on illicit drug toxicity deaths, visit the BC Coroners Service at [Statistical Report on Deaths in British Columbia](#).

## Other organizational news

---

### New Long-term Care/Assisted Living Digest – Issue 19: 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 visiting restrictions, the COVID-19 vaccine, and the Health Career Access Program.

### Free online concert dedicated to all healthcare workers: Festival Te Deum – featuring the Vancouver Vivaldi Chamber Choir

The Vivaldi Chamber Choir in Vancouver is gifting their upcoming *Festival Te Deum* production to all health care workers, free of charge.

The production will be available for viewing any time, as often as you wish, between **Friday March 26, 4 pm.** PST, and **Sunday April 11, 8:30 pm.** PST.

Register here: [www.eventbrite.ca/e/138667368833/?discount=VIP\\_Healthcare\\_Worker](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/138667368833/?discount=VIP_Healthcare_Worker)

Please use a computer to register:

1. Click on the eventbrite link.
2. Click Register.
3. Select 1 ticket.
4. Click checkout.
5. At checkout give your name and email address, you will have to enter your name, etc., again.
6. At checkout, the total should be \$0.00.

Eventbrite needs your email address so they can send you info and the access to concert. You will receive an email from Eventbrite/Vivaldi with the presentation link.

### **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](#).