



MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

A weekly update for medical staff

April 13, 2021

Clinical guidelines

New operating guideline being implemented to improve transfer times for patients needing higher level of care

BC Emergency Health Services, in partnership with all BC health authorities, will be implementing [a new standard operating guideline](#) to improve the flow of patients who need to be transferred to other facilities to receive higher levels of care.

At this time, timeframes are only required for Emergent RED transfers. By using agreed upon timeframes established by sending and receiving physicians, health authorities and the Patient Transfer Network can ensure that patients receive timely access to the appropriate clinical services that they require.

For this reason, the implementation of timeframes and formal communication patterns will now be required for all patients being transferred to a facility for higher level of care services.

A soft launch was scheduled to start on April 12 province wide, with a full Go Live on May 4, 2021.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the NH Patient Transfer and Flow Office at 250-645-7896.

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 April 12, **6,567** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic (numbers from April 5 are not available at this time).

- Cases currently active: **353**
- New cases: **32**
- Currently in hospital: **27**
 - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **13**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **130**

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](#) – April 12, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – April 7, 2021

COVID-19 vaccine prioritization for Oncology (CEV) patients in the North

The Ministry of Health has identified and prioritized Clinical Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) populations to book appointments to receive COVID-19 vaccinations starting March 29, 2021. This includes cancer patients meeting certain criteria.

Patients that fit the criteria have been added to the provincial registry and **should be receiving a letter from the Ministry of Health between now and April 15, 2021.**

As the situation evolves, more patients will become eligible.

For patients meeting the criteria that haven't received a CEV letter from the Ministry of Health by April 15, 2021, providers may have to **complete an [attestation letter for eligible patients](#), which is detailed in Appendix 1 of the full memo.**

For eligibility criteria, details about the attestation letter, and more info, [see the full memo](#).

Additional information:

- [FAQ for staff answering patient questions about the COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [BC Cancer COVID-19 Information for Patients](#)

COVID-19 vaccination and pregnancy/lactation

We want people to make an informed choice about whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine while you are pregnant or breastfeeding. For most people, getting a COVID-19 vaccine is the safest choice to protect them from COVID-19.

Review the handout for more information: [COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy \(and lactation\) patient resource](#)

Which NH staff are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine in Northern Health follows [BC's Immunization Plan](#).

Northern Health employees are currently eligible to be immunized if:

- You provide **direct patient/client/resident health care** in community services, primary care, hospital, long-term care, assisted living, or home-based settings, OR
- Your **primary worksite** is in long-term care, assisted living, or hospital (i.e., your 'home base' that you work from daily).
- This includes health care students and clinical faculty currently in or with upcoming clinical placements (through May) in health care settings.

If you qualify:

- Call **1-250-645-8900**.
- Hours: 7 am to 7 pm, seven days a week.
- The call centre will screen you for eligibility and you can be booked into an upcoming appointment in your community.

A [guide to currently eligible groups and their associated booking process in Northern Health](#) is available and updated on a weekly basis.

Alternate nitrile glove use for patient care and hazardous drugs

There are ongoing supply chain disruptions with the Sensicare ICE nitrile gloves, and increased use of alternate products is required in order to ensure an adequate supply of nitrile gloves in all areas.

The two main alternate products are:

1. Intco Synguard Nitrile Gloves
2. Medline Sensicare Free Nitrile Gloves

Both of these alternate products are safe to use for patient care including contact with blood and body fluids. Both alternate products are also safe to use for administration and patient care during the precautionary period of hazardous drugs (limitations with Carmustine and Thiotepea).

By using the alternate gloves for patient care activities it will ensure there is a sufficient supply of gloves that are safe for extended use with chemicals (Sensicare Nitrile and Sensicare ICE) when they are required (e.g. housekeeping).

For more details on alternate gloves please review the [Product Change Notice](#), [Glove Quick Reference Guide](#), or the [Condensed Glove Quick Reference Guide for AHP Use](#)

Mask use for children in health care facilities

Under the [Ministry of Health's Mask use in Health Care Facilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) policy, children under the age of 12 are exempt from the requirement to wear medical masks in a health care facility.

However, NH does encourage mask use for anyone over the age of two who can safely wear a mask. Paediatric-sized masks are available to order for those children that can wear a mask but do not have one of their own. These paediatric masks are not medically rated, and there is no reason to have a child that is wearing their own non-medical mask change into an NH-provided paediatric mask upon entering the facility.

All children over the age of 12 should be provided with the regular sized medical mask as long as it is safe for them to wear one.

Provincial PPE Assessment Process – no products containing graphene in health authorities

PPE products used in BC health authorities are managed through the PHSA Supply Chain. PPE items include respiratory protection (e.g. N95 respirators), masks, gowns, gloves, and facial/eye protection.

Since the beginning of the pandemic for any product procured through PHSA Supply Chain, each PPE product (other than regular PPE from known vendors) is reviewed as part of the PPE Assessment and Inspection process by a dedicated team of specialists. This includes a formal and robust assessment to determine whether the item is appropriate to be used within the health care environment. Only those products meeting the required standards are approved. If any supply is obtained, that supply goes through a detailed inspection process to ensure the devices meet the quality parameters to which they were assessed.

Note: at times during the pandemic, some health authorities procured PPE at a local health-authority level utilizing local processes for assessing and approving the PPE. Any locally procured PPE would not have gone through this provincial process.

No PPE has been deployed through PHSA Supply Chain to health authorities in BC that has not undergone this process. To date, 950 separate PPE products have undergone an assessment and 392 shipments have been inspected.

There have been recent news articles related to concerns with masks containing graphene.

No products containing graphene have been approved, purchased, or deployed by PHSA Supply Chain to health authorities in BC. Confirmation has been received from all vendors from whom masks have been obtained over the past year that their products do not contain graphene.

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, April 5

- 221 COVID-19 nursing assessments

- 30 primary care provider appointments (24 primary care from Prince George, Prince Rupert, Dawson Creek, Kitwanga, Smithers, Warman, Fort St. John, Chetwynd, Terrace, Taylor, and Tumbler Ridge, and 6 COVID-19 related)

Tuesday, April 6

- 266 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 36 primary care provider appointments (30 primary care from Tumbler Ridge, Charlie Lake, Dawson Creek, Kitimat, Houston, Prince George, Gitlaxt'aamiks, Terrace, Chetwynd, Bracebridge, Pouce Coupe, Smithers, Fort St. John, and Fort Nelson, and 6 COVID-19 related)

Wednesday, April 7

- 284 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 34 primary care provider appointments (27 primary care from Tumbler Ridge, Quesnel, Terrace, Dawson Creek, Prince George, Fort St. John, Terrace, Bracebridge, Chetwynd, Vanderhoof, Taylor, and Houston, and 7 COVID-19 related)

Thursday, April 8

- 272 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 29 primary care provider appointments (26 primary care from Prince George, Fort St. John, Burns Lake, Fort St. James, Houston, Terrace, Mackenzie, Dawson Creek, and Smithers, and 3 COVID-19 related)

Friday, April 9

- 255 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 28 primary care provider appointments (24 primary care from Dawson Creek, Prince Rupert, Smithers, Tumbler Ridge, Germany, Bracebridge, Lethbridge, Terrace, Chetwynd, Prince George, and Vanderhoof, and 4 COVID-19 related)

Saturday, April 10

- 181 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 16 primary care provider appointments (13 primary care from Dawson Creek, Prince George, Pouce Coupe, Windsor, Port Clements, Fort St. John, Chetwynd, and Terrace, and 3 COVID-19 related)

Sunday, April 11

- 162 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 9 primary care provider appointments (6 primary care from Prince George, Smithers, Dawson Creek, and Terrace, 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

Northern Peer Support Grant Application Form – Spring 2021

Northern Health is pleased to announce the second cycle of Peer Support grants, in partnership with Positive Living North and Seasons House, and funded by the BC Ministry of Mental Health & Substance Use.

As we enter a second year in a state of unprecedented dual health emergencies, Northern peer organizations are uniquely positioned to support the needs of people who use substances and respond to changing circumstances in Northern communities. Peer organizations develop capacity in, and deliver services to, for, and by people who use drugs.

Peers and peer organizations play a vital role in connecting people to services, providing income and skill development opportunities, and enabling relationships that save lives. This grant seeks to deliver operational and service delivery funding to allow these organizations to continue this critical work.

The call for applications will take place from April 1 to April 30, 2021 and is open to independent peer organizations within Northern Health's geographic boundaries. The maximum grant amount is \$8,000. The application form for this grant is available [here](#).

For additional information regarding this granting stream, please contact Peer.Grants@northernhealth.ca

Anti-stigma resource: NH Learning Hub course

Most of us know someone affected by substance use. It affects our friends and families and does not discriminate based on socioeconomic status or ethnicity. Substance use stigma can have a major impact on people who use substances, people who formally used substances and their family members. Stigma matters because it can prevent people from seeking help. Stigma creates barriers to accessing important and lifesaving health care services.

To access the *Creating Supportive Health Care Environments for People That Use Substances* course, please visit the [Learning Hub](#).

Other organizational news

BCPSQC launches clinician fellowship

The BC Patient Safety & Quality Council has launched a [Clinician Fellowship in Health Care Quality](#). Applications will be accepted until May 14.

The new program will support two physicians or nurse practitioners to advance their expertise in quality and patient safety while contributing to province-wide initiatives that are seeking to improve the quality of care in our health system.

Read more details [here](#).

BC declares April 11-17 as Trauma Awareness Week

The BC government has officially proclaimed April 11 – 17 as Trauma Awareness Week.

During the week, we will acknowledge trauma survivors and their families, as well as our interdisciplinary team members who work behind the scenes to save lives.

We will highlight the importance of injury prevention strategies, the role of trauma education and promote awareness surrounding the impact of major trauma in BC.

Why promote awareness of survivors of traumatic injury?

- Build public awareness of the impacts of traumatic injury
- Provide education of prevention strategies
- Acknowledge individuals and their families who have survived a traumatic injury and may be living with the physical and mental impacts
- Highlight the continuum of care, from prevention to community reintegration post traumatic injury
- Create a voice of compassion and solidarity from the trauma community on behalf of patients and their families

How can you help promote awareness?

1) Post to your social media accounts. #TraumaAwareBC

- [Download the sign](#)
- Add your message to the sign, such as I am a survivor; I am trained to help in an emergency; I acknowledge survivors.
- Take a picture holding the sign
- Upload it onto social media with #TraumaAwareBC
- Or send it to us via email tsbc@phsa.ca and then we can upload it onto our social media directly
- Tag friends and family

Posting messages of hope and support by every one of us will create an unprecedented voice of compassion. For more information, please contact the team at Trauma Services BC tsbc@phsa.ca.

2) You can add the message below to your email signature:

April 11 – 17 is BC Trauma Awareness Week. Join us in acknowledging survivors of traumatic injury and the health care teams that work behind the scenes to save lives.

[Help spread the word!](#)

Video links: Survivors of traumatic injuries share their stories

The VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation created five-minute videos in which survivors of traumatic injuries share their stories from the traumatic experience to hospitalization and recovery. These are stories of strength and how health care teams play an integral role in the journey of a patient with traumatic injuries.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmyQmYB_0Xs
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7W8UCRghQc>

Cognitive Care Kits now available to support those living with cognitive decline

Cognitive care kits are now available for sign out to Prince George residents through the Prince George Public Library. These resources provide stimulating brain activities for people experiencing cognitive decline, including memory loss, and thinking skills, due to disorders such as [Alzheimer's disease](#). The kits include games, puzzles, books, and workbooks that encourage social connection and provide meaningful links to daily activities.

Materials in the kits are designed to support the skills and abilities of people living with dementia. They encourage the use of skills the disorder has not affected, such as fine and gross motor, reading, spelling, and sorting. Proper use of the kits stimulates engagement, cognitive activity, and supports memory.

The kits were developed in partnership between the [Prince George Public Library, Northern Health](#) and the [Alzheimer Society of BC](#) through a \$6000 grant from the [United Way of Northern BC](#), and were inspired and informed by a similar project at Burlington Public Library and Halton Hills Public Library in Ontario.

Once the library resumes in-person programming, additional training for caregivers on how to use the Cognitive Care kits with their loved ones will be available.

For more information:

Ignacio Albarracin: ialbarracin@pgpl.ca

Manager of Collections & Technology, Prince George Public Library

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](#).