



MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

A weekly update for medical staff

April 27, 2021

Clinical guidelines

BCCDC guidance on COVID-19 variants of concern

With the increased prevalence of COVID-19 variants of concern in British Columbia, the BCCDC has released infection prevention and control guidance, addressing the transmission of variants.

While the variants of concern may be associated with increased transmissibility and increased risk of adverse outcomes, there is no evidence that the modes of transmission differ from the original virus.

The BCCDC reinforces the need to strictly follow infection prevention and control measures. Recommendations for PPE remain unchanged, and staff should continue to wear a mask and eye protection and continue to follow droplet and contact precautions for all known or suspected cases of COVID-19.

Read the full guidance document on the BCCDC website: [Infection Prevention and Control Guidance on SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Concern.](#)

New strategies being enacted to reduce critical care transfers to Lower Mainland

With increasing and unprecedented pressures on critical care capacity during the current COVID-19 pandemic wave, particularly in the Lower Mainland, additional short-term strategies to reduce critical care transfers to the Lower Mainland are being enacted effective immediately. For detailed information, please see [the memo.](#)

Protecting physicians and health care workers from hazardous medications

Physicians and/or healthcare workers may be exposed to hazardous drugs and related waste throughout the medication circuit – during compounding, administration, through exposure to blood and body fluids during the precautionary period, when handling waste or cleaning up spills.

In our commitment to safe workplaces, Northern Health is implementing a regional hazardous drug exposure control program that keeps workers safe, meets health care needs of patients/residents/clients, and meets WorkSafeBC regulatory requirements. For details, please see [Hazardous Drugs Exposure Control](#).

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 26, **7,080** 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: **263**
- New cases: **49**
- Currently in hospital: **18**
 - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **6**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **140**

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 26, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – April 21, 2021

Second Doses of COVID-19 vaccine

Under [BC's immunization plan](#), all individuals who received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine will have the opportunity to receive their second dose at or slightly before 16 weeks after dose one.

Individuals who received their first dose in January under Phase 1 of BC's Immunization Plan will reach their 16 week mark to receive a second dose in May. This may include First Nation community residents, high-risk health care workers and residents of long-term care and assisted living.

The province is currently testing functionality for individuals to register for their second dose. It is expected to be ready at the end of this week or early next week.

There will be three steps for staff and physicians to receive their second dose. These are the same steps that individuals follow for their first dose in BC:

1. Register
2. Receive a notification via email or text when you are eligible and then book an appointment
3. Visit the vaccine clinic and receive your second dose

Watch for the communication that we are ready in BC for individuals to register for their second dose! If you register too early and try to book a second dose appointment, the appointment will be cancelled.

See the [BCCDC Getting a Vaccine](#) web-page for more information regarding second doses of COVID-19 vaccines.

Eye Protection is an important part of PPE for all staff working with patients

Eye protection is required for all staff that have direct contact with patients or whose work requires close proximity to patients. This also includes those who are working with outpatients. For further information, please see the [Eye Protection Guidelines](#).

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 19

- 239 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 38 primary care provider appointments (22 primary care from Smithers, Prince George, Kitimat, Terrace, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, and Moricetown, and 16 COVID-19 related)

Tuesday, April 20

- 235 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 27 primary care provider appointments (27 primary care from Mclean, Thornhill, Terrace, Kitimat, Dawson Creek, Chetwynd, Jackpine, Prince Rupert, Prince George, Burns Lake, Williams Lake, Arras, and Fort St, John, and 0 COVID-19 related)

Wednesday, April 21

- 203 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 44 primary care provider appointments (27 primary care from Burns Lake, Terrace, Tumbler Ridge, Quesnel, Prince Rupert, Thornhill, Telkwa, Pouce Coupe, Prince George, Moberly Lake, Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, and Fort Nelson and 17 COVID-19 related)

Thursday, April 22

- 238 COVID-19 nursing assessments

- 21 primary care provider appointments (21 primary care from Smithers, Tumbler Ridge, Pouce Coupe, Terrace, Vanderhoof, Prince George, Thornhill, McBride, Kitimat, and Fort St. John, and 0 COVID-19 related)

Friday, April 23

- 211 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 22 primary care provider appointments (17 primary care from Dawson Creek, Prince George, Fort St. John, Terrace, Prince Rupert, Smithers, Chetwynd, and Quesnel, and 5 COVID-19 related)

Saturday, April 24

- 123 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 17 primary care provider appointments (17 primary care from Terrace, Prince Rupert, Dawson Creek, Prince George, Hixon, Kitimat, Smithers, Fort St. John, and Dease Lake, and 0 COVID-19 related)

Sunday, April 25

- 107 COVID-19 nursing assessments
- 11 primary care provider appointments (6 primary care from Vanderhoof, Quesnel, Houston, and Prince Rupert, and 5 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

Benzimidazoles and analogues (Nitazenes) and Dual Public Health Emergencies

Fact Sheet: Benzimidazoles and analogues (Nitazenes)

Please see the [fact sheet](#) for details about the more recently detected opioids in BC. The novel opioid Etodeznitazine was detected in a recent drug sample in Northern Health; however, this drug has only been detected a few times in BC and is not thought to be common in the drug supply at this time. Etodeznitazine is NOT detected with fentanyl test strip when drug checking but it will respond to naloxone.

We strongly encourage the following for safest drug use:

- To not use alone, use in the presence of others
- Go slow, start with a small amount
- Get trained on overdose response and carry naloxone
- Know the signs of overdose and call 911 immediately if you are concerned
- Use an OPS where available
- Download the Lifeguard or BeSafe app if you are in situations where you cannot use in the presence of others

Dual Public Health Emergencies – Overdose in BC during COVID-19

The overdose public health emergency, declared on April 14 2016, has claimed the lives of almost 7,000 British Columbians. Since the declaration of the COVID-19 public health emergency on March 17, 2020, the rate of overdose events and illicit drug toxicity deaths have increased and surpassed historic highs.

To learn more about the Dual Public Health Emergencies please visit – [Dual Public Health Emergencies - Overdose in BC during COVID-19](#)

Other organizational news

The Dr. Charles Jago Awards (Adapted for COVID) – Nominees

To recognize our staff, we are introducing an easier, more condensed process in which you can nominate your colleagues for the work they are doing by nominating them for a “The Dr. Charles Jago Awards (Adapted for COVID)” recognition award. This recognition will allow for more staff to be highlighted, and is a safe way for us to congratulate our staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the next several weeks, we will be highlighting staff and physicians who were nominated in the months of January/February. Click the link to read the OurNH highlight on the nominees (more staff recognition to come!):

- [Kerry Laidlaw – Nominated for Empathy, Respect, and Collaboration](#)
- [Dr. Gordon Horner – Nominated for Empathy, Respect, and Collaboration](#)

Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) Policy: Audit and Feedback Review of Antimicrobials

NHMAC has endorsed a new policy supporting the continued work by clinical pharmacists in reviewing and assessing all orders for antimicrobials prescribed to patients admitted to Northern Health facilities or seen through an ambulatory/community IV service, and providing recommendations to the MRP for optimization when necessary. The intention of this new policy is to enable the Medical Lead for AMS to provide clinical support for the AMS Program Coordinator and clinical pharmacists with ad hoc direct communication with MRPs without a formal consultation request. For more details, please read this [policy and procedure document](#).

Violence Prevention – PVPC Refresher Enhancements

Workplace Health and Safety is excited to announce a new Violence Prevention Refresher e-learning module available on the LearningHub.

This 30-minute scenario-based session provides an opportunity to review and apply violence prevention skills taught in the Provincial Violence Prevention Curriculum (PVPC) classroom sessions.

All employees in high-risk areas must participate in at least one refresher training session a year. (Note: Participants should have completed both the e-learning and classroom components of the PVPC prior to registering for the refresher sessions.

Employees still have access to facilitated online sessions as well as some in-person classroom sessions.

To register for the PVPC Refresher e-learning module visit:

[Violence Prevention – PVPC 30 Min Refresher](#)

To view available facilitator-led sessions visit:

[NHA - WHS - Violence Prevention – PVPC Refresher](#)

Dangerous abbreviations reminder – Learn more about the Required Organizational Practice and resources available

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.

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.

Never use any of the abbreviations, symbols or dose designations on the “DO NOT USE” list when communicating medication information.

The use of error-prone abbreviations, symbols, and dose designations coupled with illegible handwriting contribute to some of the most common and preventable causes of medication errors.

Northern Health has adopted the Institute of Safe Medication Practices' (ISMP) list of abbreviations, symbols, and dose designations. Those included on the list are never to be used when communicating medication information. This includes ordering or documenting medications by handwriting or electronically.

The “DO NOT USE” list is available at:

<http://www.ismp-canada.org/dangerousabbreviations.htm>.

The Northern Health Safe Medication Order Writing clinical practice standard link is [Safe Medication Order Writing](#).

See also the Policy 6-6-1-010 [Use of Abbreviations: Clinical Documentation](#).

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

UPDATE: The Health Career Access Program

The new [Health Career Access Program \(HCAP\)](#) gives you the opportunity to receive paid education and on-the-job training to become a registered [Health Care Assistant](#).

Overview:

- Total seats to fill: 215
- All 215 positions have been posted on the Northern Health Career site
- Seats left to fill: 63
- We currently have had 2 successful cohorts begin the program. The 3rd cohort started April 26 in the Northwest

First Cohort: Started January 4, 2021

- Prince George and Vanderhoof seats
- 10 seats filled for Prince George (Parkside, Gateway Assisted Living, Gateway Complex Care and Jubilee Lodge)
- 3 seats filled for Stuart Nechako Manor
- The group consists of 8 internal applicants, 5 external applicants

Second Cohort: Started March 1, 2021

- Dawson Creek, Fort St. John and Chetwynd seats
- 4 out of 7 seats were filled in Dawson Creek
- 7 out of 8 seats were filled in Fort St. John
- 1 of 1 seat was filled in Chetwynd
- The group consisted of 2 internal applicants, 10 external applicants

Third cohort: Started April 26, 2021

- Terrace, Prince Rupert, Smithers
- 8 out of 8 seats filled for Terrace
- 4 out of 8 seats filled for Smithers (2 of these candidates from Hazelton)
- 6 out of 8 seats filled for Prince Rupert (2 of these candidates from Haida Gwaii)
- The group consists of 10 internal applicants, 8 external applicants

We would like to send a thank you out to all the long-term care managers and staff who have been instrumental in getting this program started. Our current progress is due in a large part to your ongoing support.

If you have any questions about the program, please email HCAP@northernhealth.ca.

For more information on the HCAP, visit [internal application process and resources for managers](#).

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](#).