



MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

A weekly update for medical staff

August 24 2021

In this issue

[Clinical guidelines](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[Overdose prevention and response](#)

[Other organizational news](#)

[Wellness and more](#)

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

Visit the new [COVID-19 surveillance dashboard](#) from the BCCDC, to see graphs, maps, and data showing COVID-19 case rates, test positivity and vaccination coverage by local health area (LHA) and community health service area (CHSA).

As of August 23, **8,364** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **298**
- New cases: **11**
- Currently in hospital: **7**
 - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **6**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **160**

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.

- [BC COVID-19 pandemic update](#) – August 23, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – August 18, 2021

COVID-19 vaccination status information and preventive measures order

On Friday, August 20, 2021, Provincial Health Officer (PHO), Dr. Bonnie Henry, issued the [COVID-19 Vaccination Status Information & Preventive Measures Order](#).

The order requires the following actions:

Effective September 8, 2021:

1. Require that outside health or personal care providers* who do not provide proof of immunization wear a medical mask and maintain 2m distance from all other persons (with exception for care-provision requirements) while in facility.
2. Require that outside support or personal service providers, and all other outside providers with close resident contact, provide proof of vaccination or not be present on site.

Effective October 12, 2021:

1. Require that all outside health care or personal care providers provide proof of vaccination or not be present on site

*“outside health care or personal care provider” means a physician, nurse, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, home support worker, practicum student providing health care or personal care, faculty member of a health care or personal care educational or training facility, emergency medical assistant, patient transport worker, or any other non-staff member who provides health care or personal care to a resident, but does not include a visitor

See [the full memo](#) for more information.

BC launches proof of vaccination to stop spread of COVID-19

“Starting September 13, 2021, proof of vaccination will be required in BC for people attending certain social and recreational settings and events.

This important step will continue to increase the vaccination rate across the province and provide confidence to fully vaccinated people that those around them are also fully vaccinated.”

To continue reading, please visit the [BC Gov News site](#) and [article on proof of vaccination](#).

Mask mandate to reduce transmission, protect people in public spaces

“As of Wednesday, August 25, 2021, masks must be worn in all indoor public spaces throughout BC to help slow the transmission of COVID-19 as BC prepares for the fall and respiratory illness season.”

To continue reading this article, which includes additional information, such as a list of public spaces, please visit the [BC Gov News site](#).

Updates to essential visitor policy

[Northern Health's essential visitors policy](#) outlines the provincial direction and guidance for visitation to health care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

The current version includes two updates:

- Changes to long-term care and seniors' assisted living that allows for open visitation for residents during regular visiting hours and permits fully immunized visitors to remove their mask while in contact with the person they are visiting in the facility (effective July 19). Multi-level care facilities (that include both acute and long-term care beds) are to follow the policy and practice for long-term care visitation.
- Policy exemption for visitation of acute care inpatients with a length of stay over 14 days.

Revisions to acute care visitation and infection prevention and control guidance are under development at the Ministry of Health, but there is no timeframe for the release of this updated guidance for hospitals.

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, August 16

- 174 nursing assessments
- 59 primary care provider appointments
- *This is a very rough estimate of data from August 16. Due to data entry issues, we're unable to adequately report on community. Apologies for the inconvenience.

Tuesday, August 17

- 147 nursing assessments
- 43 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Hudson's Hope, Mackenzie, Pouce Coupe, Williams Lake, Prince Rupert, Prince George, Houston, Smithers, Taylor, Terrace, and Burns Lake

Wednesday, August 18

- 163 nursing assessments
- 38 primary care provider appointments from Dawson Creek, Chetwynd, Burns Lake, Hudson's Hope, Fort St. John, Mackenzie, Prince George, Port Edward, Terrace, Prince Rupert, Chetwynd, Thornhill, Airdrie (AB), and Edmonton (AB)

Thursday, August 19

- 153 nursing assessments
- 37 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Hudson's Hope, Mackenzie, McLeod Lake, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Terrace, Prince George, and Thornhill

Friday, August 20

- 160 nursing assessments
- 37 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Kitimat, Port Edward, Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Mackenzie, New Aiyansh, Sundridge, Telkwa, and Arras

Saturday, August 21

- 129 nursing assessments
- 34 primary care provider appointments from Dawson Creek, Edmonton, Fort St. John, Kitimat, Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Fort St. James, Chetwynd, Taylor, Tumbler Ridge, and Burnaby

Sunday, August 22

- 129 nursing assessments
- 15 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Prince George, Pouce Coupe, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Chetwynd, and Kitimat

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 Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic: **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

Overdose alert for Terrace and Smithers

There has been an increase in overdose events in Terrace and Smithers.

Please visit [the NH Stories website](#) to view the alert, which includes a description of the reported substance and ways to stay safe.

Paper straws now available to order for harm reduction sites

Biodegradable single use straws are now available to order for harm reduction sites.

Straws can be used for snorting crushed or powdered drugs or inhaling vapor from heating drugs on foil. These paper straws can replace rigid devices such as cracked or broken glass tubes, which have a higher risk of transmitting blood borne viruses from small cuts or tears in the nasal passage.

Straws come in a variety of colours to reduce the risk of unintentionally using another person's straw.

For more information please visit [the BCCDC Harm Reduction Services website](#) regarding the harm reduction supply program for launch of paper straws. The [new harm reduction order form](#) is also available on this website.

Other organizational news

Update: IHA cardiac and patient transfer diversions – Diversion extended

Due to the unprecedented wildfire activity in the Central Okanagan as well as the increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases, Interior Health (IHA) is requesting that all patients, including those requiring cardiac services, continue to be diverted from Interior Health to the lower mainland tertiary care facilities August 23 – 30 2021.

The BC Patient Transfer Network (PTN) has been notified to help support redirection of higher level of care patient transfers and cardiac patients from IHA in discussion with physicians. As per the regular post-COVID-19 transfer process, physicians are required to call PTN at 1-866-233-2337 for all patient transfers, including cardiac patients. When a patient transfer is required, PTN will coordinate a physician conference as needed with the suggested tertiary referral centres as well as the other provincial cardiac sites.

A reassessment and update to support access and service delivery for Northern Health with IHA will be reviewed Monday, August 30 for patient transfers and cardiac referrals with follow up communication to be distributed.

Urgent FP anesthesia locum coverage needed for Dawson Creek (August 27 – September 6)

Northern Health is willing to consider incentives for those with appropriate availability, and reasonable expenses will be covered. Please contact Dr. Temple to discuss further financial details.

Dates needed: August 27 – September 6

Contact name: Dr. Becky Temple

Phone: 250-262-5508 (cell)

Email: Becky.Temple@northernhealth.ca

Revised order set: Tocilizumab infusion in critically ill COVID-19 patients

Due to the increasing COVID case hospital admissions in the province and a national supply shortage of Tocilizumab, the BC COVID-19 Therapeutics Committee (CTC) has once again revised their clinical practice guidance regarding tocilizumab injection dosing for the treatment of patients with severe COVID-19 requiring life support measures.

Our current order set will be changed back to a fixed dosing strategy of tocilizumab 400 mg IV x 1 dose. Clinical criteria for use remains unchanged at this time. The [updated NH order set](#) and parenteral drug monograph available on [OurNH](#) have been updated to reflect this new dosing strategy. The order set will also be posted on the [COVID section of physician website](#).

Please visit the physician website to read [the full memo](#).

Physician highlight

The [NH Stories site](#) is a great place to read stories about NH physicians, staff, events, insights, and much more! As a highlight of some of the work being done by NH physicians, don't hesitate to read about [Dr. Judy Dercksen](#) of Quesnel, who is passionate about supporting patients with chronic pain, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and chronic inflammation.

If you have a story to tell, or have a colleague you'd like to spotlight, please reach out to Kim Matheson at kimberly.matheson@northernhealth.ca.

Physician Quality Improvement (PQI) Champion announcement

The Physician Quality Improvement (PQI) team is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Denise Jaworsky (she/her) into the role of SSC PQI QI Champion. The PQI Initiative is one of two flagship programs of the Specialist Services Committee (SSC). The SSC represents a partnership between the Government of BC and Doctors of BC, and includes regular representation from health authorities. As such, the PQI initiative is co-designed in collaboration with all health authorities.

For more information about Dr. Jaworsky and this announcement, please read [the PQI memo](#).

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

To recognize our staff, we introduced an easier, more condensed process where 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 allowed for more staff to be highlighted, and a safe way for us to congratulate our staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Click the link to read the OurNH highlight on the nominees:

- [Christine Platsko – Nominated for Empathy, Respect, Collaboration and Innovation](#)
- [Shelly Todd, Roma Toor, Katy Anderson – Nominated for Collaboration](#)

Antimicrobial Mobile Assistant: Spectrum mobile health app/website

The NH Antimicrobial Stewardship Program is pleased to share that our health authority will be joining the Spectrum mobile Health team starting September 20, 2021. This means that NH prescribers, pharmacists and nurses will be able to easily and quickly access NH created guidelines and antimicrobial/pathogen information from their mobile devices and computers.

What is it?

- Spectrum Mobile Health (Spectrum) is a mobile app that can be customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship and infectious diseases resources within any hospital or health system.
- It is also accessible via desktop computers.

Why should we use this tool?

- Up to 50% of antimicrobial use in hospitals and community settings is unnecessary or inappropriate and contributes to the development of antimicrobial resistance, prolonged hospital stays, increased rates of *C. Diff* infections, increased healthcare costs and patient mortality.
- It has been shown that facility specific treatment guidelines and protocols facilitated by an antimicrobial stewardship program can lead to an increase in appropriate antimicrobial prescribing and therefore reduce antimicrobial usage, costs and adverse patient outcomes.

You can download the Spectrum app for free today from your app store or bookmark it [online](#). Starting September 20, you will be able to access Northern Health specific guidelines by searching for NH in the available locations list.

Thank you note to Dawson Creek and District Hospital and Fort St John Hospital staff

Communication from Angela De Smit, Chief Operating Officer, Northeast HSDA; Dr. Becky Temple, Medical Director Northeast; and Kendra Kiss, South Peace Health Services Administrator

On behalf of Northern Health we would like to take the time to thank all of our NE staff and physicians as well as our partners such as RUDi/RVTS and BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) for your willingness and commitment during the recent Dawson Creek and District Hospital (DCDH) Emergency Department Diversions. These diversions have been unparalleled for a community the size of Dawson Creek, DCDH and Northern Health to even have one shift on diversion. Through this experience we recognize that we are not alone, your support was and continues to be tremendous and it was evident in many ways that make us proud to lead the DC and NE Team.

There were a number of planning sessions that took place resulting in considerable measures to ensure the safe continuity of emergency room services in Dawson Creek and the impact that would be experienced throughout the NE with the diversions. We had to act swiftly and collectively. The residents of our NE communities trust us to stay focused and to provide access to safe and quality care. That is exactly what you did, from the front line staff that included nurses, nurse practitioner, physicians, unit clerks, support services, laboratory and x-ray amongst others and managers, you are the real heroes.

No one wants the pandemic to continue any longer than necessary. We know that you are feeling anxious as we continue through this journey together coupled with the workforce challenges impacting our goal to provide health care services. The work over the past few weeks clearly reflected the steadfast belief of our entire Team to take care of our patients and communities.

In closing, please remember the work you do is so important to us, the community we serve and you are making a difference. Without the compassionate and dedicated staff like you, we would not make the same impact during this concerning time. We will seek to keep you informed as the health care landscape shifts.

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](#).