



# MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

*A weekly update for medical staff*

**September 7, 2021**

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## **COVID-19**

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### **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 September 3, **9,059** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **595**
- New cases: **89**
- Currently in hospital: **20**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **12**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **161**

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](#) – September 3, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – September 1, 2021

## UBC continuing professional development (CPD) COVID-19 update: Expert Q&A with public health, vaccine, epidemiology, and lab specialists

Join the UBC continuing professional development (CPD) team for a [free online accredited educational session](#) where highly experienced and knowledgeable public health leaders and medical experts will answer your questions, share their experiences and recommend best practices in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar will include a panel of presenters and participants will be prompted to ask their questions in real-time using webinar technology. **We encourage you to send your questions in early.**

The webinar is from 6:30 – 8 pm September 14 (Tuesday), and invites physicians and other health care providers to attend. You can earn up to 1.5 Mainpro+/MOC section one credits for this event, and may [register here](#). The panel is as follows:

- **Dr. Reka Gustafson:** Vice President, Public Health and Wellness and Deputy Provincial Health Officer
- **Ms. Nomi Mate:** Public Health Nurse
- **Dr. Mark Lysyshyn:** Deputy Chief Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health
- **Dr. Mel Kraiden:** Medical Director of the Public Health Laboratory, BCCDC
- **Dr. Manish Sadarangani:** Director, Vaccine Evaluation Center at BC Children's Research Institute
- **Moderator: Dr. Simon Moore,** Family Physician, UBC CPD Medical Lead

## New health measures introduced for Northern Health region

Northern Health (NH) is introducing new public health orders covering the entire Northern Health region to manage COVID-19 activity. These changes are effective at 12:01 AM Tuesday September 7, 2021.

Please visit the [NH stories news page](#) for a full list of the changes.

## Masking update: Revised policy

The province has issued a revised policy: [Mask Use in Health Care Facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). This policy replaces all previous guidance on masking for staff, visitors, and patients.

**Effective immediately, all staff in health care settings are required to wear a medical mask at all times, including in common areas and break rooms unless eating or drinking, regardless of immunization status.** This includes staff in Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities.

Masking requirements for visitors and patients remain the same. Visitors in Long Term Care and Assisted Living must wear a medical mask according to the [Overview of Visitors in Long-Term Care and Seniors' Assisted Living](#). Visitors and patients in acute care and other

health care settings must wear a medical mask when entering and moving around the facility. Admitted patients must wear a medical mask when they leave their room.

For an overview of masking requirements, please see the [COVID-19 Mask use Guideline](#). If you need more information, contact your local [PPE Champion](#) or [workplacehealthandsafety@northernhealth.ca](mailto:workplacehealthandsafety@northernhealth.ca).

## Updates to acute care visitor policy

Summary of [new provincial acute care visitation policy](#):

- Up to two visitors may visit a patient at a time with some exceptions:
  - For compassionate care visits the limit of two visitors may be removed in consultation with the clinical care team.
  - For pediatric care, labour and delivery visits, siblings may accompany parents or legal guardians of a newborn/infant/child.
  - Visitors shall be limited to one visitor per patient within the facility at a time in the emergency department and intensive care unit, except when death is anticipated as imminent. A child may be accompanied by two parents/guardians.
- Addition of guidance for alternate level of care (ALC) patients to encourage visitation and consider outings
- Patients and visitors are encouraged to work in partnership with care providers to determine how best to coordinate visits and patients can refuse to provide consent for a visit.
- In an outbreak situation or in response to regional needs, Medical Health Officers will provide direction.

A [new visitors poster](#) has been produced for hospital entrances.

Northern Health's (NH) Essential Visitors policy has been updated and renamed to "[Visitors during COVID-19 Response](#)". It includes some additional NH-specific guidance:

- Multi-level care facilities (with acute and long-term care beds) will follow the guidance for visitors in long-term care
- Essential visitor guidance remains in the NH policy for reference if regular visitation is restricted.

Clinical decision-making will continue to guide unique and/or emerging circumstances and visitor restrictions are to be employed with empathy and respect, in collaboration with patients and families and [consider cultural safety during COVID-19](#).

## Implementation date update: COVID-19 vaccination status information and preventive measures order

### Via Northern Health Emergency Operations Committee

On Friday, August 20, 2021, Provincial Health Officer (PHO), Dr. Bonnie Henry, issued the [COVID-19 Vaccination Status Information & Preventive Measures Order](#). Northern Health has received additional materials and information related to the implementation of this Order from the Ministry of Health. Amendments to this order, as outlined in the [Residential Care](#)

[Staff COVID-19 Preventive Measures PHO Order](#) effective September 2, 2021, have changed the work required as follows:

- Implementation of proof of immunization for outside care providers will begin September 13, 2021
  - “Outside health care or personal care provider” means a physician, nurse, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, home support worker, interprofessional team member, lab services staff, 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
- **Effective October 12, 2021:**
  - Require that all outside health care or personal care providers, outside support or personal service providers, outside care providers who do and do not have direct contact with a resident, provide proof of vaccination or not be present on site.
- The definition of fully vaccinated has changed from 14 days post-second vaccine to 7 days

If you have questions, contact [aaron.bond@northernhealth.ca](mailto:aaron.bond@northernhealth.ca) or [tracee.dunn@northernhealth.ca](mailto:tracee.dunn@northernhealth.ca). For more information, review the [memo](#) distributed on August 24, 2021.

Note: The province has issued a revised policy: [Mask Use in Health Care Facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). This policy replaces all previous guidance on masking for staff, visitors, and patients. **Effective immediately, all staff in health care settings are required to wear a medical mask at all times, including in common areas and break rooms unless eating or drinking, regardless of immunization status.** This includes staff in Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities.

## Recent demonstrations and protests

**This memo is being sent to you on behalf of Cathy Ulrich, President & CEO and Colleen Nyce, NH Board Chair**

Over the course of the last several weeks, there have been demonstrations and protests near Northern Health facilities regarding the public health measures and COVID-19 immunization program meant to protect our families and communities during this ongoing pandemic. While staff and physicians are continuing to go above and beyond to provide extraordinary care for people who have contracted COVID-19 and to provide immunizations and COVID-19 case and contact management follow up, these protests are demoralizing.

In our Canadian democracy, it is people’s right to peacefully gather and demonstrate or protest – however, it is distressing when our right to protest affects people’s access to health care and services and disrespects the ongoing commitment of staff and physicians providing care and services.

It is encouraging to know that these protests are not representative of the feelings of northern community stakeholders. Yesterday, we met with local government leaders from across the North and they shared their overwhelming support for all that Northern Health

staff and physicians have done and continue to do to provide care and services during this unprecedented time. There is an awareness of how hard staff and physicians are working and a sincere appreciation for these efforts. It is important that you know, despite the protests and demonstrations, how very much you are appreciated by the majority of people across the North.

On behalf of the Northern Health Board and Leadership Team, we thank you for your commitment and want you to know how valued you are by Northern Health and by the majority of people in communities across the North.

### **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 30**

- 328 nursing assessments
- 47 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Mackenzie, Pouce Coupe, Prince George, Quesnel, Taylor, Terrace, Moberly Lake, Terrace, Cecil Lake, Tomslake, and Thornhill

#### **Tuesday, August 31**

- 255 nursing assessments
- 49 primary care provider appointments (5 COVID-19 assessments) from Dawson Creek, Prince George, Kitimat, Calgary (AB), Fort St. John, Terrace, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Houston, Glen Vowell, Hudson's Hope, Mackenzie, Chetwynd, and Smithers

#### **Wednesday, September 1**

- 247 nursing assessments
- 35 primary care provider appointments from Terrace, Prince Rupert, Dawson Creek, Hudson's Hope, Chetwynd, Pouce Coupe, Prince George, Smithers, Thornhill, Fort St. John, Moberly Lake, Quesnel, and Edmonton (AB)

#### **Thursday, September 2**

- 225 nursing assessments
- 36 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Houston, Montney, Terrace, Wonowon, Burnaby, Kitimat, Lax Kw'alaams, Prince George, Vanderhoof, and Big Valley (AB)

#### **Friday, September 3**

- 229 nursing assessments
- 38 primary care provider appointments from Charlie Lake, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Hudson's Hope, Mackenzie, Pouce Coupe, Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Moberly Lake, New Aiyansh, Baker Creek, Houston, McLeod Lake, and Moricetown

**Saturday, September 4**

- 193 nursing assessments
- 37 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. James, Fort St. John, Mackenzie, Pouce Coupe, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Terrace, Thornhill, Kitimat, Moberly Lake, Sundridge, Cecil Lake, and Telkwa

**Sunday, September 5**

- 217 nursing assessments
- 28 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Baker Creek, Fort St. James, Hazelton, and Sundridge (ON)

**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**

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**Illicit drug toxicity deaths for June 2021 now available**

**(BC Coroners Report – Released August 31, 2021)**

On August 31, the BC Coroners Service released a [report on the illicit drug toxicity deaths for June 2021](#).

Summary:

June 2021 (N=159) was the second highest number of deaths ever recorded (June 2020 N=185).

In June, NH have the second highest rate of illicit drug toxicity deaths in the province with a rate of 45 deaths per 100,000 individuals

Northern Health Summary:

**NH** saw 6 illicit drug toxicity deaths in June (~25 deaths per 100,000 individuals)

- **NW** has seen 16 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 42.1 deaths per 100,000 individuals

- There were 3 deaths in June
- **NI** has seen 33 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 44.7 deaths per 100,000 individuals.
  - There were 3 deaths in June
- **NE** has seen 16 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 48.7 deaths per 100,000 individuals.
  - There were 0 deaths in June

For more information, see the BC Coroners Service report: [Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths in BC \(January 1, 2011 – June 30, 2021\)](#)

## **Other organizational news**

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### **UPDATE: IHA Cardiac and patient transfer diversions – Diversion extended**

This memo is a follow up to the August 30th memo regarding the activated Interior Health Authority (IHA) Cardiac and Patient Transfer Diversions. Due to the unprecedented wildfire activity in the Central Okanagan as well as the increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases, 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 September 7 – September 13 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, September 13 for patient transfers and cardiac referrals with follow up communication to be distributed.

### **Doctors of BC 2021 Health Authority Engagement Survey seeks your input**

Beginning Monday, September 13, Doctors of BC will be conducting its 6th annual Health Authority Engagement Survey. This important survey seeks input on your level of engagement and interaction with our Health Authority. You are encouraged to participate and provide your feedback. The results will help us collaborate with you and your colleagues in shaping programs and policies at a regional and local level, to improve physician engagement.

For more information, see [the full memo](#).

### **Interested in seeing what the new Mills Memorial Hospital plans look like?**

We'll be showing design plans and more information about the Mills Memorial Hospital (MMH) Replacement project in Terrace from September 13 to 23. One display will be in the

Skeena Mall, and the other will be in the basement of the Mills Memorial Hospital, in the hallway outside of the cafeteria. Drop by and check them out!

The draft designs and project information will also be available on the [Let's Talk MMH site](#).

### Prescriber participation in the Northern Health virtual substance use stream

Northern Health would like to invite physicians and nurse practitioners to indicate their interest in participating in the delivery of prescriber services through the Northern Health Virtual Substance Use Stream. This service is seeking prescribers who are comfortable with virtual Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) prescribing and/or pharmaceutical alternatives prescribing. For more information on how to apply, review the [expression of interest](#).

### Physician Quality Improvement workshops for fall 2021

The [Physician Quality Improvement](#) (PQI) program has some exciting new [quality improvement workshops](#) coming out this fall.

Workshop	Time	Dates
QI Tools & Data	8:30 am – 4:30 pm	October 21, 2021
Systems Thinking and Navigation	8:30 am – 12:30 pm	October 22, 2021
Organizing your Project	8:30 am – 4:30 pm	November 17, 2021

For more information or to register please contact: [physicianqi@northernhealth.ca](mailto:physicianqi@northernhealth.ca)

### PSBC maternity and newborn care framework survey: Invitation to complete survey by September 10, 2021

As a member of our health care system, we invite you to give feedback about your experience of accessing information resources provided by Perinatal Services BC ([PSBC](#)). These PSBC information resources include guidelines, pathways, algorithms, forms, educational information, prenatal information, and more. Your feedback will help us to better understand who is using these PSBC information resources, how the PSBC information resources are currently being accessed, and how we can redesign and improve accessibility and usability of these resources.

To access the survey, click and share the link: [PSBC Maternity and Newborn Care Framework Survey](#).

#### Survey overview

- This confidential [survey](#) is being conducted by PSBC and the Office of Virtual Health at the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). Taking part in this confidential survey is completely voluntary. There are no right or wrong answers. You may skip any question. It will take about 5 minutes to complete the survey.
- The survey is open from **July 29 to September 10, 2021**. Please only complete the survey once during this period.

- For more details about the survey, review the survey overview on the link provided above.

### Questions?

- Contact Taslin Janmohamed-Velani, Project Manager, PSBC, [psbc@phsa.ca](mailto:psbc@phsa.ca)
- Dominik Stoll, Senior Leader, Virtual Health, PHSA, [officeofvirtualhealth@phsa.ca](mailto:officeofvirtualhealth@phsa.ca)

### **\*NEW\* Northern Health antimicrobial mobile assistant – Firstline mobile health app/website (formerly known as Spectrum)**

The NH Antimicrobial Stewardship Program is pleased to share that our health authority will be joining the Firstline mobile Health team (formerly known as Spectrum) 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?

- Firstline (formerly known as 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 Firstline 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.

### 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](#).