



# MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

*A weekly update for medical staff*

**October 26, 2021**

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## **Clinical guidelines**

### **Baricitinib: Alternative Therapy to Interleukin-6 Inhibitors (Tocilizumab) for COVID-19**

New evidence regarding the use of baricitinib in patients with COVID-19 has emerged and the BC COVID Therapeutics Committee (BC CTC) has released new recommendations for the use of this medication in specific COVID positive populations as an alternative to IL-6 inhibitor therapy (i.e. tocilizumab). Based on this new information, and dwindling national supplies of tocilizumab, NH Therapeutics Committee has developed an [order set](#) and a [drug information sheet](#) to facilitate baricitinib prescribing that aligns with the BC CTC recommendations. The regional order set provides clinicians with inclusion and exclusion criteria along with renal function adjusted dosing options.

Note: NH Pharmacy has started acquiring stock and will distribute as necessary depending on tocilizumab supply.

## **COVID-19 news and updates**

### **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 October 25, **14,577** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **980**
- New cases: **130**

- Currently in hospital: **78**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **21**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **202**

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](#) – October 25, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – October 20, 2021

## **NH staff are encouraged to register for ImmsBC – COVID-19 booster notifications are underway!**

In the coming months, NH staff who received their second dose of COVID-19 vaccine **at least 6 months ago and less than 42 days after their first dose** will be eligible for a booster dose. Notifications will be sent to eligible staff via ImmsBC. In order to receive a notification, staff are required to register with ImmsBC by completing the online registration form at [getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca](http://getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca) or by phoning the Provincial Call Centre at 1-833-838-2323. All previous dose records will be imported to ImmsBC after registration. Eligible staff profiles will be flagged for a booster dose.

After receiving a notification, staff are welcome to [book an appointment or drop-in at any NH clinic](#).

## **Reminder: Mandatory vaccination for all BC health care workers**

On September 13, 2021, Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry announced that all health-care workers will need to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Further to this, the PHO order on mandatory vaccination will include **all** staff and physicians employed by BC health authorities, as well as all students, researchers, fee-for-service/contract physicians, and all individuals and contractors who work, study or volunteer at our sites.

The order will come into effect on **October 26, 2021**. For more information, please refer to the memo in the emailed digest.

## **Find a COVID-19 vaccine clinic in your area!**

Looking to get your COVID-19 vaccine?

Visit the [Northern Health website](#) where you can find the most up-to-date clinics available in your community.

## **Masking for children ages 5 and over**

BC has updated the Public Health Order for masking in indoor public spaces to require masks for all children ages 5 and over (was previously ages 12 and over). In health care facilities, medical masks have been required for visitors and patients, however these one size fits all medical masks may not properly fit these younger children. Therefore, young

children between the ages of 5 and 12 will be permitted to wear their own cloth or non-medical masks in health care facilities. A properly fitting non-medical mask is less likely to irritate or lead to increased touching of faces and eyes in young children, than an ill-fitting medical mask.

Since it may be difficult to guess the age of older children, screeners are asked to use their best judgment to determine when to require a medical mask for children, e.g. if you do not think the medical mask will fit the child properly, allow them to wear their own mask if they have one. Paediatric sized masks (non-medical) are available to order through eRex for children that do not have their own mask.

### **COVID-19 Adult palliative care order (non-ICU) and symptom management algorithm**

Based on feedback from front-line caregivers and a literature review of COVID-19 palliative symptom management experiences in other countries, the [COVID-19 Adult Palliative Care Orders \(non-ICU\)](#) has been updated and streamlined. The [COVID-19 symptom management algorithm](#) has also been updated for patients receiving end-of-life care outside of the ICU to provide additional support and guidance for prescribers. Please review and update any previous versions of these resources that you may have printed off or downloaded.

### **Clarification to Northern Health regional orders**

An updated Northern Health Gatherings and Events Covid-19 Orders for the Northern Health Authority was put in place at 12:01 am, October 21, 2021.

The orders that were previously announced for the Northern Health region, on September 7, have been rescinded. The order announced for Northern Health region on October 14 has been superseded by the October 21 order. This change is to provide clarity and reduce any confusion about the orders

For the full memo, please read the memo attached to the email version of this digest.

### **Town hall for medical staff regarding COVID-19**

In September and early October, there will be a number of Town Hall information sessions available for medical staff to get the latest information and ask questions about the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. For each session, Northern Health's leaders Dr. Jong Kim, the Chief Medical Health Officer, and Tanis Hampe, the new VP of Public Health, will give a brief presentation, then provide an opportunity for medical staff to ask questions or provide comments.

For more information, including topics included in each presentation and how to join the (virtual) meetings, please click into the schedule of events:

- [November 3 \(5 – 6 pm\)](#)
- [November 9 \(5 – 6 pm\)](#)
- [November 17 \(5 – 6 pm\)](#)
- [November 22 \(5 – 6 pm\)](#)
- [November 29 \(5 – 6 pm\)](#)

These town halls will be recorded. Please contact [physican.education@northernhealth.ca](mailto:physican.education@northernhealth.ca) for access to the latest town hall recording.

## Trusted links and resources for COVID-19

- On the NH physician website:
  - [COVID-19 information and resources](#)
- OurNH resources:
  - [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
  - [Pandemic Recovery Toolkit](#)
- [Northern Health online booking form – COVID-19 test](#)
- [Northern BC community immunization coverage page](#)
- [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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### Overdose response: Naloxone saves lives

Toxic drugs continue to circulate throughout our region causing overdose events and deaths. Given the contamination of the illicit drug supply overdoses can look different and may take more naloxone to respond. It is vital that family, friends and loved ones of people who use drugs are familiar with the signs and symptoms of overdose, have naloxone and know how to respond.

If you are a community based service provider and have not been trained yet on overdose response connect with your local THN provider by using the [site finder](#) for overdose response training and naloxone. Naloxone training can also be done online [here](#).

#### Further Resources:

- [BCCDC Take Home Naloxone Program](#)
- [Do I keep giving naloxone?](#)

## Other organizational news

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### Physician highlight

The [NH Stories site](#) is a great place to read stories about NH physicians, staff, events, insights, and much more! This month, we're sharing the recent retirement story about lactation consultant [Jeanne Hagreen](#) brought a fascinating history onto the NH Stories site.

Jeanne's work helped pave the way for a very important support service for families in the North.

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](mailto:kimberly.matheson@northernhealth.ca).

### **Ectopic Pregnancy: New Methotrexate PFS stock locations**

Methotrexate PFS stock locations for ectopic pregnancy have been revised. See [memo](#) for further details regarding availability in NH.

### **Make work easier for you – Check out the latest Quality Improvement tools and resources!**

The Quality Improvement team is excited to share updated [quality improvement resources and tools](#) (OurNH link), which can be found on the [Quality Improvement](#) (OurNH link) page. In the absence of providing in-person Quality Improvement training during the COVID-19 pandemic response, these resources can support NH staff & physicians with Quality Improvement initiatives and knowledge building.

The resources include a visual of the five phases of a quality improvement project, along with links to some of the most requested tools in each phase.

In health care, quality improvement (QI) is the framework we use to systematically improve the ways care is delivered to patients, residents and clients and to improve practice for staff and physicians. Quality improvement is about giving the people closest to issues affecting quality of care, the time, permission, skills and resources they need to solve them. It involves a systematic and coordinated approach to solving a problem using specific methods and tools with the aim of bringing about a measurable improvement.

The resources included here will support you in your quality improvement efforts with your team. It is strongly recommended that you review the [Quality Improvement Toolkit](#) (OurNH link) document for an overview of the QI process and available tools.

If you have questions or need support using these resources, do not hesitate to reach out to our Quality and Innovation team at [qualityandinnovation@northernhealth.ca](mailto:qualityandinnovation@northernhealth.ca).

### **Influenza Prevention Program 2021/22 - peer immunizers needed!**

Peer Immunizers are RNs, RPNs, LPNs or pharmacists who have volunteered to provide influenza immunization to peers and unit/site employees while working their regular scheduled shifts. This gives employees timely access to influenza immunization.

If you are interested in this role, please email: [influenza@northernhealth.ca](mailto:influenza@northernhealth.ca)

### **Prevent influenza, mask or immunize. Report your choice; it's your duty to care.**

Have you had your flu shot, or decided you won't get one this year? Don't forget to let us know.

Physicians and staff can visit [flu.healthcarebc.ca](http://flu.healthcarebc.ca) to report your choice (by December 1, 2021).

More questions or information, check out the flu page on OurNH, read the memo on the physician website, or email us at [influenza@northernhealth.ca](mailto:influenza@northernhealth.ca).

## Flu season is quickly approaching

Getting the influenza vaccination is more important than ever this year, especially with a health authority already experiencing a COVID-19 surge.

With more people returning to the workplace, children back in school and changes to public health mandates, it is expected to see an increase of influenza cases this year compared to last year.

Peak influenza season is from December to February, and it takes a minimum of two weeks for antibodies against the flu to develop fully following vaccination. Northern Health will start offering influenza vaccine to health care workers October 18, 2021. For more information about flu vaccination, please see:

- [Northern Health influenza information](#)
- [OurNH influenza information](#)
- [BCCDC influenza information](#)
- [CDC influenza information for health professionals](#)

For information about the flu vaccine clinics being offered in the region, please see the [Northern Health flu information site](#), and the [ImmunizeBC Find an Influenza \(Flu\) Clinic site](#).

## COVID-19 Virtual Clinic data

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### 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, October 18

- 166 nursing assessments
- 53 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Cecil Lake, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Greenville, Hazelton, Houston, Moberly Lake, Prince George, Quesnel, Taylor, Terrace, Hudson's Hope, Smithers, Thornhill, Kamloops, Kitimat, and Harris (SK)

#### Tuesday, October 19

- 174 nursing assessments
- 52 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Charlie Lake, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Fraser Lake, Houston, Moberly Lake, Prince George, Terrace, Valemount, Chetwynd, Port Edward, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Thornhill, and Hazelton

**Wednesday, October 20**

- 172 nursing assessments
- 54 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Charlie Lake, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Fraser Lake, Goodlow, Moberly Lake, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Chetwynd, Port Edward, Quesnel, Smithers, Thornhill, and Fort St. James

**Thursday, October 21**

- 155 nursing assessments
- 42 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Houston, Moberly Lake, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Terrace, Thornhill, Dawson Creek, Valemount, Kitimat, Surrey, and St. Albert (AB)

**Friday, October 22**

- 106 nursing assessments
- 55 primary care provider appointments from Prince Rupert, Chetwynd, Thornhill, Dawson Creek, Terrace, Fort St. John, Quesnel, Smithers, Pouce Coupe, Hudson's Hope, Prince George, and Vancouver

**Saturday, October 23**

- 87 nursing assessments
- 33 primary care provider appointments from Terrace, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Smithers, Tumbler Ridge, Fort Nelson, Prince George, Fort St. John, Mackenzie, Chetwynd, Thornhill, Quesnel, Grande Prairie (Ab), Vernon, Prince Rupert, Chetwynd, and Kitimat

**Sunday, October 24**

- 78 nursing assessments
- 16 primary care provider appointments from Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson, Moberly Lake, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Montney, Quesnel, Smithers, and Vanderhoof

**Wellness and more**

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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](#).