



# MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

*A weekly update for medical staff*

**November 9, 2021**

## ***In this issue***

[Clinical guidelines](#)

[COVID-19 news and updates](#)

[Overdose prevention and response](#)

[Other organizational news](#)

[COVID-19 Virtual Clinic data](#)

[Wellness and more](#)

## **Clinical guidelines**

### **NEW visitor vaccination requirements for acute care**

The [Ministry of Health's Overview of Visitors in Acute Care](#) has been updated to require visitors be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 unless they are under the age of eligibility, have an approved medical exemption, or are in certain care settings outlined in the policy.

Policy summary:

- Individuals visiting acute care facilities must be fully vaccinated; proof of vaccination (vaccine card and photo identification) is required to enter
- Guideline remains up to two visitors at a time per patient in most situations. Visitors will continue to undergo the health screening at the entrance, follow IPC requirements and wear a medical mask (and additional PPE as required). Visits will continue to be documented at the site.
- The vaccine requirement does not apply to:
  - Children under the age of vaccine eligibility (currently age 12)
  - Individuals with an approved medical exemption
  - Exemptions from the vaccination and other visitor requirements (e.g., variation in number of visitors permitted) are in place for support persons (as defined under the previous "Essential Visitor" policy). These will be determined on a case-by-case basis:
    - Compassionate care (e.g., critical illness, palliative care, end-of-life)
    - Pediatric care, labour and delivery
    - Emergency department
    - ICU
    - Visits paramount to the patient's physical care and mental well-being
    - Visits for supported decision making

If your site is currently under visitor restrictions due to an outbreak or other reason those restrictions will remain in place.

If there are questions about the updated visitor guidelines please contact your manager, medical director, or [pandemic.response@northernhealth.ca](mailto:pandemic.response@northernhealth.ca).

## COVID-19 news and updates

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### 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 November 8, **16,068** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **608**
- New cases: **34**
- Currently in hospital: **48**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **16**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **231**

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](#) – November 8, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – November 3, 2021

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

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** are **now eligible** for a booster dose. In order to receive an invitation for a booster, 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. In the coming months, more staff groups will become eligible so it is important that all staff are registered in Imms BC so you are invited when it is your turn.

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

## Customized text notification to people who test positive for COVID-19 in the NH region

Working with the PHSA, NH public health has implemented a customized text message that will be sent to all people in northern BC who test positive for COVID-19 and who have signed up to receive their results by text. Previously, a generic provincial text message was sent. This new customized text message includes regional information and a link to the NH web page: [I have COVID-19](#) where individuals can access up-to-date information and resources to support them.

## Town hall for medical staff regarding COVID-19

During the next month, 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 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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### Illicit drug toxicity deaths for September 2021 now available (BC Coroners Report – released November 9 2021)

Attached are the most recent Coroner Reports for Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths that contain data until the end of September 2021. These reports were released November 9<sup>th</sup> 2021

#### Summary

- August 2021 (N=181) this was the largest number of suspected deaths ever recorded in August
- September 2021 (N=152) this was the largest number of suspected deaths ever recorded in September
- The number deaths in August and September it equates to approximately 5.5 deaths per day
- In **2021**, VCH had the highest rate of 45 deaths per 100,000 individuals, followed by **NH** with a rate of 43 deaths per 100,000 individuals

#### Northern Health Summary

- **NH** saw 13 illicit drug toxicity deaths in August 2021 and 9 illicit drug toxicity deaths in September 2021
- **NW** has seen 30 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 51.9 deaths per 100,000 individuals, which is the third highest in BC
  - There were 5 deaths in August
  - There were 2 deaths in September
- **NI** has seen 47 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 40.9 deaths per 100,000 individuals, which is the sixth highest in BC.
  - There were 7 deaths in August
  - There were 5 deaths in September
- **NE** has seen 20 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 36.8 deaths per 100,000 individuals, which is the eight highest in BC.
  - There were 1 deaths in August
  - There were 2 deaths in September

Full Reports can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

## Other organizational news

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### Qualitycast North

Northern Health's Physician Quality Improvement (PQI) program has a brand new podcast - Qualitycast North hosted by Dr. Shyr Chui!

Episode one, featuring Dr. Denise Jaworsky, is now up. This episode focuses on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) group medical visits, and how they use patient education to reduce hospital admissions and emergency room visits.

For more information and to listen to the episode, visit the [PQI website](#).

## Supports for mental health

BC has launched a new HUB for workplace mental health:

<https://www.workmentalhealthbc.ca/>

- Workplace mental health has never been more important. BC's Hub for Workplace Mental Health is here to help.

Care for Caregivers website has a number of helpful Healthcare Worker Resources:

<https://www.careforcaregivers.ca/>

- This site provides a diverse collection of quick and easy resources to support your mental health
- Care to Speak is a free and confidential peer support service:  
<https://www.careforcaregivers.ca/caretospeak/>

## HSV/VZV Acceptable collection swab for testing at BCCDC

BCCDC now require that health care facilities discontinue the use of Hologic Aptima® Unisex and Multi-test swabs for the collection of skin and genital samples for HSV/VZV RT-PCR testing and use COPAN UTM collection kit.

For more information, please see the memo in the emailed digest.

## Clinical Quality Program newsletter – October 2021

The most recent [Clinical Quality Program newsletter](#) is now available. This newsletter highlights the key activities and contacts for each of the programs within the Vice President, Primary and Community Care and Professional Practice portfolio.

## Reducing risk of food allergy in infants – November 19 Q&A session with Dr. Zaneta Lim

An opportunity for health care providers who support families with infants.

Join Terrace-based pediatrician Dr. Zaneta Lim for a Q&A session about the prevention and treatment of food allergy in infants.

The intent of this session is to provide an opportunity for health professionals to ask clarifying questions of Dr. Lim, after they have reviewed the following recorded presentation from Dr. Victoria Cook, pediatric allergist: [Prevention and Treatment of Food Allergy in Infancy](#) (May 2021, 1.5 hours)

Register via the LearningHub: [Reducing Risk of Food Allergy in Infants](#)

For more information, related resources, and key practice points, see [OurNH news: Reducing risk of food allergy in infants – November 19 Q+A session](#)

## The importance of the influenza vaccine during COVID-19

It's likely that influenza viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both spread this fall and winter. This means getting an influenza vaccine during 2021-2022 is more important than ever.

Influenza and COVID-19 can have similar symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat or fatigue. Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease that can lead to serious illness, hospitalization or death. If influenza spreads rapidly in communities at the same time as COVID-19, it could overwhelm our health care system and put our loved ones at risk.

The Workplace Health and Safety influenza clinics are winding down, to be completed November 12. However, access to the influenza vaccine can still be done through your local pharmacy as well as public health vaccine clinics.

Northern Health requires all employees to self-report your decision, you can find the link to do so here: [Influenza Self-Reporting \(healthcarebc.ca\)](https://healthcarebc.ca/influenza-self-reporting)

### **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](https://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 information**

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, November 1**

- 128 nursing assessments
- 44 primary care provider appointments from Dawson Creek, Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Prince Rupert, Moberly Lake, Smithers, Terrace, Thornhill, Prince George, Taylor, and New Aiyansh

**Tuesday, November 2**

- 130 nursing assessments
- 34 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Houston, Hudson's Hope, Metlakatla, Moberley Lake, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Smithers, Terrace, Thornhill, Mcbride, and Quesnel

**Wednesday, November 3**

- 135 nursing assessments
- 54 primary care provider appointments from Fort St. John, Goodlow, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Smithers, Terrace, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Kitwanga, Moberley Lake, Quesnel, South Hazelton, Kitimat, and Pouce Coupe

**Thursday, November 4**

- 116 nursing assessments
- 36 primary care provider appointments from Charlie Lake, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Wonowon, Chetwynd, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Gitsegukla, Hudson's Hope, Hazelton, and Thornhill

**Friday, November 5**

- 121 nursing assessments
- 57 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Houston, Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Thornhill, Cecil Lake, Batnuni Lake, Fort St. John, Hay River (NWT), Hudson's Hope, Laxkw'alaams, Quesnel, Telkwa, Mackenzie, Taylor, Fort Fraser, and South Hazelton

**Saturday, November 6**

- 58 nursing assessments
- 41 primary care provider appointments from Fort St. John, Chetwynd, Burns Lake, Dawson Creek, Goodlow, Houston, Mcleod Lake, Prespatou, Prince George, Telkwa, Terrace, Moberly Lake, Saskatoon (SK), Thornhill, Arras, Smithers, and Prince Rupert

**Sunday, November 7**

- 69 nursing assessments
- 34 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Mackenzie, Prince George, Quesnel, Smithers, Terrace, Tomslake, Fort McMurray, Tumbler Ridge, Gitsegukla, Pouce Coupe, and Thornhill

**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](#).