



# COVID-19 UPDATE

MEDICAL STAFF

**Friday, March 20, 2020**

For the latest news and resources on COVID-19, visit the [Coronavirus page on OurNH](#) or see the [physician website](#).

## Provincial updates

- **As of March 19, 2020**, there have been **FOUR** (4) confirmed COVID-19 cases in NH.
- In the province, there are **271** identified cases.
- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – March 19, 2020.

## COVID-19 clinical guidelines update

New guidance for providers taking COVID-19 specimens from symptomatic health care workers is [available](#).

Detailed information on how to clean and disinfect physicians' offices is available on the BCCDC [Infection Control page](#).

## Will I be able to find out if there's a case in my community?

Northern Health won't identify or release the location of people in our region who may have contracted COVID-19 if we know where they contracted it, if we know where they are, and if they are isolating per protocols.

Under those conditions, they are not a threat to public health, so they are entitled to privacy. As well, we don't want to incite panic or rumours in communities. This is consistent with the approach being taken across the province.

If there are cases of community transmission, or there is an unexplained jump in confirmed cases, communities will be notified as necessary to ensure public health management.

It's important that people are prepared and take the appropriate precautions we have been sharing regularly. The actions we're asking people to take are the same, whether there are cases in your community or not.

## Help manage our PPE supply

In light of the global shortage of PPE, we ask you all to take some mindful steps to protect our supplies. In mid-January, we had enough PPE to last us several months. A few weeks later, as news of COVID-19 emerged overseas, our usage increased dramatically.

Additional supplies have been sourced, and we do have adequate stock; however, it is very important for us to safeguard our remaining supplies. Some steps you can take to help:

- Use PPE only when needed.
- Remind others of the need to manage PPE usage.
- Safeguard our pandemic-related supplies from theft by limiting stock in public areas.

A group is being formed to look at PPE needs for outside groups to ensure adequate supply and stock. They will look at outside requests and will assess and allocate as needed.

## COVID-19 implication for cancer care

Breast cancer screening is suspended until further notice. All recall notice activity and screening promotion activities will be suspended. Patients who are currently booked will receive cancellation notices by phone. If a patient shows up for a booked screening appointment and has not been contacted, screening will be completed.

Cancer surgery falls under the urgent/emergent category, and will to a large extent continue, but will be evaluated on a case-to case basis in surgical departments as to mortality, morbidity and impact on the patient and system.

We do not recommend suspending any chemotherapy regimes or systemic therapy delivery at this point. However, in-person elective activities such as surveillance and survivorship follow-up should be suspended until further notice.

## Temporary change in fit testing regulations

The Ministry of Health has mandated that the frequency of fit testing for health authority staff shall be **temporarily** changed from a one-year requirement to a two-year requirement. This is effective immediately and until further notice.

As a result of these changes, and to help preserve our provincial stock of respirators and reduce any unnecessary use, [all N95 respirator fit-test sessions will be cancelled](#) effective **Thursday March 19** until further notice.

With these changes, the majority of departments now have a significant percentage of their staff with a valid fit-test. As a result, departments should have enough fit-tested staff available at any given time. Where an N95 respirator is required to provide care for patients, departments must use staff members who have been fit-tested within the past two years.

## Schools and child care support

On March 17, 2020 the B.C. government announced that K-12 classes are suspended indefinitely. We realize this is concerning for many members of our workforce, each of whom plays an important role in delivering care and service.

We are actively working with the Province and the Provincial Health Services Authority to identify ways we can support child care options for essential workers, including health care workers. More information is forthcoming.

## COVID-19 related fraud

There has been a significant increase in emails designed to trick people into clicking on malicious links and attachments or providing sensitive information like credit card numbers and passwords.

The malicious email may appear to come from a legitimate organization like the “Public Health Agency” or the “Centre for Disease Control” with a subject line like “Confidential Cure for Coronavirus” or “Coronavirus Safety Measures”.

**Everyone needs to exercise extreme caution when receiving these emails.** Do not open any email that appears suspicious or asks you to click on a link or open an attachment if you don't know where it came from.

Although your first instinct might be to delete or ignore these emails when you receive them, we ask that if you are using your Northern Health email, please use your Cisco Email Reporting buttons on the top ribbon of Outlook to mark them as “Phishing” or “Spam”.

## COVID-19 therapeutics and treatment reference group

**A therapeutics and treatment reference group** for COVID-19 has been formed to review provincial and international treatment options and guidance. The group met today (Friday) and will strive to have guidelines available for NH early next week.

**Physician Representation:** Abu Hamour (Infectious Disease), Patrick Rowe (Emergency), MJ Slabbert (Critical Care), Brian Hillhouse (Family Medicine), Sharla Olsen (Internal Medicine & Respiriology).

**Pharmacy Representation:** Alicia Rahier (Antimicrobial Stewardship Pharmacist), Ryan Doerksen & Jessica Brecknock (Medication Use Management Pharmacists) and Dana Cole (Regional Director, Pharmacy).

If you are looking for advice about how to test or treat a patient with a suspected case of COVID-19, call the intensivists at the **Rural Outreach Support** group (ROSe) 24/7 for additional information, support, or guidance. **Toll-Free: 1-888-918-0626**

For questions, contact Dana Cole at 250-614-9530 or [dana.cole@northernhealth.ca](mailto:dana.cole@northernhealth.ca).

## Physicians in self-isolation

All physicians who are currently in, or need to go into, self-isolation are asked to please email Susan Trenholm ([susan.trenholm@northernhealth.ca](mailto:susan.trenholm@northernhealth.ca)) to report your current status.

This will be an important step in ensuring that we have adequate coverage of health care workers as we move forward.

## Is the Northern Health Connections bus running?

We will be restricting passengers to those who require essential out of town appointments, such as dialysis patients. Additional decisions may be forthcoming on travel suspensions.

## Stress and emotional support

### Support Lines

- **Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP)**
  - 1-844-751-2133 – 24/7 crisis counselling support and/or referral to community resources.
- **Physician Health Program** – supports available through Doctors of BC
  - Refer to information online at: <https://www.doctorsofbc.ca/resource-centre/physicians/physician-health-program-php>
- **BC Crisis Line**
  - Call 310-6789 for access to 24/7 crisis services.

### Trusted links

- [Northern Health Internal Memos](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [HealthLink BC FAQ](#)
- [WHO FAQ](#)
- [Health Canada FAQ](#)
- [COVID-19 content in other languages](#)

### 24/7 Physician call centre

- Number: 250-645-7897
- Local: 507897
- Toll Free: 1-833-645-7897