



COVID-19 DAILY DIGEST

MEDICAL STAFF

Monday, March 23, 2020

Physician updates will be sent out Monday to Friday. For the latest news and resources on COVID-19, visit the [Coronavirus page on OurNH](#) or on the [physician website](#). Printable PDFs of these updates are on the physician website.

Provincial updates

- **As of Monday, March 23**, there were **5** confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Northern Health.
- In the province, there were **472** confirmed cases.
- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – March 23, 2020.

Reminder: Who needs testing?

Testing is available for all patients who need it, but not everyone requires a test. B.C. is currently testing those **with respiratory symptoms** who are:

- Hospitalized, or likely to be hospitalized
- Health care workers
- Residents of long term care facilities
- Part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak.

Please ensure that you are familiar with the latest BCCDC guidelines for testing.

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/lab-testing>

Health care worker testing guidelines

A flow diagram has been developed by public health to assist with decision making when it comes to health care workers being tested for COVID-19. It is available in a [printable version on the physician website](#).

NH Laboratory Update: COVID-19 testing and turnaround

NH Lab Services has been working diligently with logistics and lab partners across the province to ensure access to equitable testing and reporting for COVID-19 is available for patients within Northern Health.

BCCDC experienced capacity issues with testing and reporting became severely delayed. Testing for NH samples will be shifting to LifeLabs in Burnaby on March 23 to take advantage of their new PCR system going online that day. We have been assured that NH samples will take priority. Any untested NH samples at BCCDC were transferred to LifeLabs on March 22.

Once samples are received at LifeLabs, reporting is expected within a normal time frame for PCR testing. Results will be available through regular reporting channels and in real time via e-Health Viewer or Excelleris or PowerChart.

Work is underway to bring COVID-19 testing to Northern Health. A project lead has been assigned to create the framework needed to set up and support a new molecular PCR test for COVID-19. Availability of COVID-19 testing in NH is reliant on product and human resources but it is hopeful that the test can be made available by mid-April at UHNBC.

New policy: Essential visitors only for acute care, long-term care, and assisted living

- As of today, Monday, March 23, 2020, NH is allowing only essential visits.
- The Family and Visitor Policy from the Ministry of Health now reads:
 - “Effective immediately, health authorities shall restrict visitors to essential visits only. Essential visits include, but are not limited to:
 - Visits for compassionate care e.g. end of life and critical illness
 - Visits considered paramount to patient/client and well being, such as assistance with feeding or mobility and
 - Existing registered volunteers providing services as described above only.”
- We have posters/signage available for this – see the [Coronavirus on OurNH](#)

COVID-19 emergency department preparation

A [memo](#) has been created highlighting steps you can take to ensure your ED is prepared.

- Plan your designated assessment room / resuscitation bay
- Organize your staff and physicians for PPE and N95 aerosol-generating procedures
- Prepare for department de-clutter and repeated cleaning

For further information on dealing with COVID-19 in the ED, please see the newest [regional response guideline for Novel Coronavirus](#) (COVID-19).

Public encouraged to act as though COVID-19 is in all communities

Northern Health is sharing the following messaging to the public:

- Given the evolving situation in Canada and the evidence that there have been community-acquired cases in British Columbia, it is important that we all behave as if COVID-19 is present in all of our communities.
- It is critical that everyone follows all public health directives on self-isolation, social distancing, and gatherings – to protect yourself, your families, and your communities.

Providing sick notes for employees

The province of BC has ordered that at this time, employers must excuse workers for sickness **without requiring a doctor's note**. As such, physicians should not be providing sick notes for patients at this time.

For more information, visit the [COVID-19 Provincial Support and Information](#) page.

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