



COMMUNITY UPDATE

The latest from Northern Health

September 2023

Organization and community news

Northern Health is a large organization with many complex services and operations. We are pleased to share with you a new resource, "[Understanding Northern Health](#)", a guide with information, resources and tools from NH and a variety of provincial and regional agencies and organizations. We hope you find it helpful for accessing resources, understanding the Northern and provincial health care system, and answering general questions.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR) is September 30

NDTR honours history and healing together and aims to acknowledge the painful truths of historical injustices and mistreatment of Indigenous peoples of Canada. This day also provides an opportunity for reflection, dialogue, and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the pursuit of healing and reconciliation.

In the lead up to NDTR, [learn more](#) about the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's Survivor's flag.

Appropriate use of the emergency department and options for accessing health care

Emergency rooms in the North are under increasing strain. Help take the pressure off the doctors and nurses that serve our communities by seeking care through these options, when you can:

- Call your family care provider
- Visit an urgent primary care centre or primary care clinic if one is available in your community
- Check out [HealthLinkBC.ca](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca) or speak to a nurse at 8-1-1
- Talk to your local pharmacist about their expanded services [Book an appointment with a pharmacist](#).
- Book an appointment with the [Northern Health Virtual Clinic](#) at 1-844-645-7811
- Call 1-855-344-3800 to book an appointment with the [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day](#)

For life-threatening emergencies like chest pains, difficulty breathing, broken bones, or severe bleeding, the ER is the place to be.

For more information, please visit our [service interruptions page](#).

Dawson Creek & District Hospital (DCDH) Replacement Project

There has been a lot of work underway on the site of the new hospital! The topsoil has been stripped and bulk excavation is underway. Visit [Let's Talk DCDH](#) to see photos of the progress and read more project updates. You can also register for the site to add comments on posts, ask questions and share your thoughts.

Additionally, Infrastructure BC, in conjunction with Northern Health, have released the Dawson Creek and District Hospital Replacement [Project Report](#). The report provides an overview of the need for the project, its features and benefits, and the different procurement options analyzed.

The DCDH Construction Camera is now active and available to the public!

That means any day, any time, you can see what construction progress is being made on the site of the new hospital in Dawson Creek. You can view a live snapshot, zoom in and out and side to side, compare photos from two different days, go back in time and look at archive snapshots, and view and download a time-lapse. See more with the [DCDH construction camera](#)!

Terrace couple give largest personal donation in Foundation's history

A generous Terrace couple, the Gascons, have made the largest ever personal contribution to the [Dr. R.E.M. Lee Hospital Foundation](#) in the foundation's history. The undisclosed amount, announced this past weekend during Riverboat days in Terrace, will go to the 'Closer to Home' campaign to support Tier 3 level services in the birthing unit at the new Mills Memorial Hospital.

For more info about the donation, the campaign and why expanded services in the new MMH birthing unit is so important, go to [Let's Talk MMH](#)

Helpful wildfire resources:

As the 2023 wildfire season continues, here's a reminder of useful resources for staying informed:

- [Northern Health – Wildfires and your health](#)
- [Extreme heat and heat warnings](#)
- [Wildfire preparedness](#)
- [Latest air quality advisories](#)
- [BC Wildfire fire list](#)
- [Emergency Info BC Advisories](#)
- [Heat Warning in BC](#)
- [Disaster stress](#)
- [BCCDC – Wildfire smoke](#)
- [FireSmoke Canada – BC smoke forecasts](#)

- [Recover after a wildfire – Re-entering your home or business](#)

Northern Health Stories highlights

The [Northern Health Stories site](#) is a great place to read about what's going on in Northern Health – people, places, projects, and more! Here are some recent highlights:

- [Overdose awareness: Today and everyday](#)
- [Nourishing positive environments for youth, food, and belonging](#)
- [Spotlight on our people: Mary Ann Lo, GoHealth BC travel nurse](#)
- [Stuart Nechako Manor has gone to the birds](#)
- [New scopes at Prince Rupert hospital can save lives with early diagnosis](#)
- [NH Gardening Policy delivers delicious homegrown food to LTC residents](#)
- [Milk donations are up! Prince George NICU on track to break their milk collection record](#)
- [Travelling alone this summer? Here's how to stay safe](#)
- [Hot weather, heat warning, or extreme heat emergency?](#)
- [Wildfires and protecting your mental wellness](#)
- [Students explore career opportunities and practice hands-on health care](#)
- [Rotary Manor holds a successful "Clinical Skills Day" for staff](#)
- [Spotlight on our people: Claudia Kranabitter, GoHealth BC travel nurse](#)
- [Flying objects over UHNBC](#)
- [E-booklet reduces stress of children undergoing procedures in Terrace](#)

Ministry of Health highlights

Including highlights from the [Ministry of Health](#) and [Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions](#) that are of interest to all BC residents:

- [Poor air quality from wildfires increases health risks to vulnerable people](#)
- [Midwives Association of British Columbia ratifies tentative three-year agreement](#)
- [New program helps people with overdose-related brain injuries](#)
- [Nourishing positive environments for youth, food, and belonging](#)

Public Health

BC Coroners Services - unregulated drug deaths - July 2023

For the Coroner's full report please go to: [Unregulated Drug Death Summary](#)

For more detailed public information please go to [Unregulated Drug Poisoning Emergency Dashboard \(bccdc.ca\)](#).

BC Summary:

- In 2023, there have been 1455 suspected unregulated drug deaths. The rate of unregulated drug deaths in BC is 46.2 deaths per 100,000 individuals in 2023.
- There were 198 suspected unregulated drug deaths in July 2023. The July numbers represents a 5% decrease over the number of deaths in July 2022 (208) and a 4% increase from June 2023 (191).
- The number of unregulated drug deaths in July 2023 equates to about 6.4 deaths per day.

- By Health Authority (HA), in 2022, the highest rates were in Northern Health (59.8 deaths per 100,000 individuals) and Vancouver coastal (56.7 deaths per 100,000 individuals); the highest number of unregulated drug deaths were in Fraser and Vancouver Coastal Health Authorities (397 and 423 deaths, respectively), making up 56% of all such deaths during 2023.
- For July 2023, Interior Health has the highest rate of Unregulated Drug Deaths with 5.3 deaths per 100,000 individuals.

Northern Health Summary

- In 2023, Northern Health has the highest rate of unregulated drug deaths in the province with a rate of 59.8 deaths per 100,000 individuals (N=**107**).
- In July 2023, the rate of unregulated drug deaths was 4.2 per 100,000 (N=**13**).
- The **Northwest** region has seen **32** unregulated drug deaths in 2023 for a rate of 70.1 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is the **fourth** highest rate in BC.
 - July 2023 there was **1** unregulated drug deaths rate of 1.3 deaths per 100,000 individuals.
- The **Northern Interior** has seen **64** unregulated drug deaths in 2023 for a rate of 70.8 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is the **third** highest rate in BC.
 - July 2023 there were **9** unregulated drug deaths rate of 5.8 deaths per 100,000 individuals.
- The **Northeast** has seen **11** unregulated drug deaths in 2023 for a rate of 25.6 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is the **third** lowest rate in BC.
 - July 2023 there were **3** unregulated drug deaths rate of 4.1 deaths per 100,000 individuals.

Overdose prevention and response

August 31 – International Overdose Awareness Day

August 31 marked International Overdose Awareness Day, an annual worldwide event with the goals to raise awareness about drug poisoning and outdated drug policies, to remember those who have lost their lives to the toxic drug supply, and to promote a sense of community and unity among those affected.

Through community events, memorials, and outreach activities, International Overdose Awareness Day strives to unite people and organizations in a joint effort to inspire positive change and save lives. The day serves as a call to action for policymakers and communities to learn more about the toxic drug supply and to involve people with lived and living experience in implementing strategies that address the complexities of substance use.

[Learn more about International Overdose Awareness Day.](#)

Text alerts for toxic drugs available in the North

In response to the toxic drug emergency, a text message alert system was launched across Northern Health. The system sends text alerts with timely information and up-to-date resources to people who use drugs, those who support them, and community members. It's a public

health measure to prevent drug poisonings and deaths and provides. Opt-in by texting **JOIN** to **ALERTS (253787)**. [More information](#).

Toxic drug alert: Fort St. John – August 25, 2023

There has been an increase in overdoses in Fort St. John linked to a red/orange colored drug sold as “down.” This drug causes sudden overdose and memory loss, this happens when the drug is smoked and injected. Please take care, drugs move throughout the North, and share the alert widely. We have included safety recommendations on the Northern Health [website](#).

COVID-19

COVID is still with us, in our communities, impacting our friends and loved ones. Vaccinations remain the best defence against both influenza and COVID-19.

BC’s fall vaccination campaign will be based on the latest [recommendations](#) from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). NACI currently recommends that most people get their next vaccine dose in fall 2023, when new vaccines that offer better protection against the latest variants will be available.

More information on the fall COVID-19 vaccination campaign will be available in the coming months.

If you received an invitation to get vaccinated this spring, you can still book an appointment by:

- Use your existing invitation through the [Get Vaccinated system](#) and make an appointment
- If you don’t have an invitation, call the provincial call centre to arrange an appointment [1-833-838-2323](tel:1-833-838-2323)

BC is now planning for a COVID-19 booster program in fall 2023 based on latest recommendations and vaccines to be approved by Health Canada.

Beyond vaccinations, we can all take key preventive measures to avoid illness, including:

- Stay at home if you feel unwell and try to avoid spending time with people at higher risk of serious illness.
- Practice respiratory etiquette: wear a mask in crowded, public spaces, and cough and sneeze into your elbow.
- Clean your hands regularly.
- Avoid touching your face, especially your eyes, mouth and nose.

For more information, visit [BCCDC](#) or the [Provincial Infection Control Network of British Columbia](#).

Resources and information

The [Northern Health COVID-19](#) and [COVID-19 information](#) pages have information about immunization clinics, testing and self-isolation, the community toolkit, and trusted contacts.

For information outside of Northern Health, see [these trusted resources](#).