



COMMUNITY UPDATE

The latest from Northern Health

November 2023

Welcome to the Northern Health community update! Stay connected as we bring you monthly updates and valuable insight into health care in the North.

Organization and community news

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

Get vaccinated! It's respiratory illness season again!

The Province is encouraging everyone age six months and older to register to get their COVID-19 and influenza vaccines this fall. Protect yourself, those around you, and the health care system. Invitations to book your appointment have been going out from the Get Vaccinated system.

It's fast, easy and free to get vaccinated. Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available at NH clinics and some participating pharmacies. Clinic information can be found on the Northern Health [website](#). Register for your COVID-19 and flu vaccines and book your appointment through the [Get Vaccinated](#) system or call 1-833-838-2323 (toll free). **Note:** if you find there are no appointments available in your community, please check back; additional clinics are being added where necessary. For more information, visit the Ministry of Health [respiratory illness page](#).

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.

- Wear a mask if you have cold/flu symptoms, or are getting over an illness

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

Masking required in health care facilities

All visitors to NH health care facilities are required to wear a medical mask. Masks are also required in long-term care and assisted living facilities in all common spaces and when participating in common indoor events. Let's keep our patients, residents, and staff safe and healthy this respiratory illness season.

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](#) 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](#).

Community Wellness Awards (2023/24) – Funding for First Nations and Métis communities

There are two new funding opportunities to support holistic health and wellness initiatives for First Nations and Métis communities in the Northern BC region.

The Community Wellness Awards are accepting applications until November 13, 2023 and are providing awards of up to \$8,000 for First Nations communities, and \$5,000 for Métis communities. For more information on grant criteria and who can apply, visit: [Granting programs | Indigenous Health \(indigenoushealthnh.ca\)](#)

Mammograms see what we can't

Wondering if it's time for your screening mammogram? You're in luck! If you're aged 40 or older you can book one today without a referral!

Call [1-800-663-9203](#) to book, or visit the [BC Cancer website](#) to find a clinic near you. About

one in eight women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. Early detection could save your life!

Sobering centre offers safe space for people in Prince George

More people in Prince George and the surrounding area have access to a new sobering centre operated by Carrier Sekani Family Services in partnership with the Province and Northern Health. "There is a vital need for people to have access to sobering and assessment services close to home," said Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. "Together with our partners at Carrier Sekani and Northern Health, we're bringing these critical services to Prince George to save more lives and keep people safe."

The centre is a 10-bed facility that provides a safe space for people 18 and older who are intoxicated from alcohol and/or other substances and unable to safely care for themselves. People can refer themselves or they can be referred by a family member, supportive care person, health-care providers, emergency services or other community partners. Read the full BC Gov News article "[Sobering centre offers safe space for people in Prince George](#)".

Changes on the horizon for the University Hospital of Northern BC

Patients, their loved ones and health-care staff at the University Hospital of Northern BC (UHNBC) will soon benefit from improved, secure parking options as a new parkade is constructed at the hospital.

An early works agreement has been approved to start construction on a 471-space parkade next to the BC Cancer Centre for the North. This will be followed by demolition of the Northern Interior Health Unit (NIHU) to support future site master plans. Work on this initial step is expected to begin in 2024 and be complete in 2025.

For more information visit our [stories website](#).

Mills Memorial Hospital Replacement Project - Quarterly Update

Learn the latest about the new Mills Memorial Hospital, currently under construction in Terrace, in the October 2023 MMH project quarterly update! This update includes:

- Move in timelines
- Progress photos from inside the new hospital
- New (bigger and better) Emergency department layout and features

Read the update online, or download a copy on our [website](#).

Dawson Creek & District Hospital (DCDH) Replacement Project

The DCDH Project has reached a number of significant milestones over the past few months. Read the [October Quarterly Update](#) to learn more about where we're at, what's next, and other exciting news. Some of these exciting milestones include the [installation of the first tower crane](#), workers [pouring concrete](#), work being completed on a [new sidewalk and temporary parking lot](#) and the launch of the [DCDH construction camera](#).

A new hospital isn't just an investment in health-care, it also means economic opportunities for the region. Construction has just started, but [local businesses and workers are already involved](#) in the project. Many local residents and businesses have been looking for information about upcoming opportunities. Graham Design Builders LP (Graham) is responsible for all employment and contracting related to the construction of the new hospital. A project of this size requires a large workforce and they are committed to filling as many positions as possible with people from the local community and region. During the peak of construction, there will be over 300 workers on-site.

Interested in employment, apprenticeship training, business opportunities and/or subcontracts? Submit a resume and/or send information about services and product offerings to Graham Design Builders LP via email to dawsoncreekhospital@graham.ca.

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:

- [Safety tips for families this Halloween](#)
- [Vision Zero grants support safer streets in the North](#)
- [NH launches new and innovative in-house security program in partnership with Ministry of Health](#)
- [Nice to meet you... virtually!](#)
- [Winners of Health Care Simulation Week CPR contest announced](#)
- [Spotlight on our people: Nicole Workman, GoHealth BC travel nurse](#)
- [Grieving the loss of an unborn child: One mother's experience](#)
- [NH Hand Hygiene Program helps keep you safe and healthy](#)
- [Supporting mammography screening for Northern patients without a primary care provider](#)
- [IMAGINE Community Grants – Deadline extended](#)
- [Before the snow flies – go by bike!](#)
- [Body image: What is it and what affects it?](#)
- [Youth Voice Matters](#)
- [Long-term care volunteer finds future career at the Pines](#)
- [Dr. Helm receives a Lifetime Achievement Award from RCCbc](#)
- [Back to work after baby: How employers support breastfeeding](#)

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:

- [New clinical trials will save lives, support B.C. innovation](#)
- [Grants now open to promote physical activity opportunities](#)
- [Northern communities work to improve culturally appropriate addiction supports](#)

Public Health

Indigenous harm reduction

Harm reduction for substance use aims to enhance safety by promoting compassionate support from family, community, and health care. Strategies include naloxone training, sterile supplies, safe spaces, and more. Indigenous harm reduction goes further, addressing colonialism's impact on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. It seeks a decolonized, Indigenized approach, reconnecting people with culture and revitalizing spiritual and natural relationships.

The '[Connecting to Culture](#)' video series comprises three educational videos crafted to facilitate dialogues within First Nations communities on topics like harm reduction, substance use, and stigma. This series adopts an Indigenous perspective, featuring insights from Elders, peers, and youth.

Overdose prevention and response

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](#).

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