



COMMUNITY UPDATE

The latest from Northern Health

Wednesday, November 25, 2020

Note: Please share any information in this update as appropriate.

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COVID-19

COVID-19 case counts and statements

678 cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **153**
- New cases: **29**
- Currently in hospital: **23**
 - Currently admitted to HAU/ICU in hospital: **10**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **6**

As always, it is important that we remain vigilant in our communities.

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.

Surveillance reports, including a breakdown of cases by HSDA, are [posted each Friday by the BCCDC](#).

- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – November 24, 2020
- [BCCDC Surveillance report](#) – November 20, 2020

Province-wide restrictions on events and social gatherings are now in effect

By order and direction of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), all events and social gatherings are suspended in order to significantly reduce COVID-19 transmission related to social interactions and travel.

The order is currently in effect until midnight, December 7, 2020.

Under these new orders, no social gatherings of any size are allowed with anyone outside of your household or core bubble.

For more information, see the [Government of BC page on province-wide restrictions](#).

New masking orders and enforcement are in effect across the province

In light of rising cases of COVID-19 across the province, new masking orders and enforcement measures have been put in place. Masks are now required in many indoor public spaces and all retail stores.

Failing to follow these new orders could result in a \$230 fine.

Full order details and more information:

- [BCCDC masks page](#)
- [Government of BC - Mask requirements in public indoor settings](#)
- [Use of face coverings in indoor public spaces order](#)

Contact tracing: What is it and how does it work?

“Contact tracing” is a term we’re hearing more and more these days. It’s a powerful tool to help contain the spread of COVID-19 – and it’s especially important given the recent rise in cases throughout BC.

For example, BC Minister of Health Adrian Dix said on November 19 that BC will soon have more than 1,000 contact tracers, including 76 culturally sensitive contact tracers hired through the First Nations Health Authority.

But what is contact tracing, exactly?

When someone’s diagnosed with COVID-19, the contact tracers’ job is talk to that person right away to find out who they’ve recently been in contact with.

They’re looking for people who were within six feet of the sick person (let’s call him Fred) for more than 15 minutes, starting from two days before Fred first had symptoms. Each of these people will have to self-isolate for 14 days, whether they have symptoms or not.

Armed with the list of people who may have been exposed, Northern Health can now check in on Fred’s contacts each day to see how they’re feeling. And if any of them develop symptoms and test positive for COVID-19, the contact tracers swing into action again to track down *that* person’s contacts.

To help explain this critical step in our COVID-19 prevention strategy, Northern Health has prepared two contact tracing handouts. Please feel free to share these with friends, family, or anyone else that may find them helpful:

- [How contact tracing works, a linear journey](#)
- [What's contact tracing](#)

Understanding COVID-19 test results

The recent addition of text messaging as a way to receive positive COVID-19 test results has prompted questions about self-isolating, and contact tracing. The BC Centre for Disease Control has added information on [Understanding Test Results](#) to its website.

This page include advice for self-isolating in the event of a positive test result, and when to expect contact from public health (within 2 to 3 days).

Saline gargle testing has been expanded to include adults

The COVID-19 saline gargle test has recently been expanded to include all persons over the age of 4. The gargle will be offered at [designated collection centres](#) across NH, but will not be available as part of emergency or inpatient care, or at doctor's offices.

The saline gargle test is only validated for COVID-19. It cannot be used to test for other viruses such as influenza or RSV. Any patient who requires multi-viral testing will still require a nasopharyngeal swab.

The saline gargle can be offered to priority populations, including healthcare workers, and will be tested in-house at designated NH labs for fastest turnaround time.

The preparation for saline gargle for adults is the same as for children: they must be able to swish and gargle for 30 seconds, and must not have had anything to eat or drink, smoked or vaped, or brushed their teeth in the hour before their appointment. Please refer to the [COVID-19 Adult Gargle Instructions](#).

To request a test, call the Northern Health Virtual Clinic at **1-844-645-7811**. Note that tests are available for people who meet the criteria of the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) and are not available for asymptomatic pre-employment/pre-travel screening.

New Long-term Care/Assisted Living Digest – Issue 12: Masking guidelines, annual rate letters, and more

The long-term care task group is producing updates twice a month for residents and families of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities.

[This issue](#) of the update provides information about the new masking guidelines, how outbreaks are determined, and a reminder about annual rate letters.

Trusted links and resources for COVID-19

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): A Northern Health Guide for Your Community](#)
- [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 COVID-19 Online Clinic & Information Line: **1-844-645-7811**
- Northern Health Environmental Health Officer Line: **1-250-565-7322**
- For **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

It's National Addictions Awareness Week; see what you can do to help those struggling with addiction

It's National Addictions Awareness Week – a time to be an “Ambassador for Change”. Here's what you can do to help:

- Reduce stigma – addiction challenges are health conditions that deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Know the signs of overdose and [what to do](#).
- Stay safer by buddying up when using, or if using alone, download the [Lifeguard app](#).
- Carry naloxone, or support requests for naloxone.

Learn more at: <https://www.stopoverdose.gov.bc.ca/>.