



# COMMUNITY UPDATE

*The latest from Northern Health*

**Wednesday, December 23, 2020**

**Note:** The next NH Community Update will go out on Wednesday, January 6, 2021. All the best to you for a safe and physically distanced holiday season!

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## COVID-19

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### COVID-19 case counts and statements

As of December 22, **1,620** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **462**
- New cases: **22**
- Currently in hospital: **52**
  - Currently admitted to HAU/ICU in hospital: **20**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **16**

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.

Situation 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](#) – December 22, 2020
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – December 18, 2020

## Northern Health administers first COVID-19 vaccines in Prince George

The first doses of COVID-19 vaccine were administered to a group of high-risk health care workers in Prince George on Tuesday, December 22.

The first person to receive the vaccine in the Northern Health region was Biserka Becker, a care aide at Jubilee Lodge in Prince George. Biserka was vaccinated along with a group of health care workers from University Hospital of Northern BC, and the nearby Jubilee Lodge long-term care facility.

Dr. Marietije Slabbert, the physician lead for the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at UHNBC, was also among the group to receive the vaccine. Dr. Slabbert is considered a high-risk health care worker because of her work in the ICU.

“This has been a really long journey for people working in health care, and the community at large, and it’s wonderful that this vaccine has finally arrived in the North; it’s like the best Christmas present ever,” said Dr. Slabbert. “The teams of physicians, nurses, care aides, cleaners -- everybody has been working so hard, and we’ll continue working hard to get this vaccine to every person in the North who wants to be vaccinated.”

Northern Health is distributing the vaccine in accordance with the priority vaccine groups as recommended by the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#), beginning with:

- High-risk health care workers
- Long-term care and assisted living residents

As more vaccines are approved by Health Canada, more communities and more groups of people will receive the COVID-19 vaccine. We expect to be able to immunize all Northern BC residents who wish to have the vaccine by the end of 2021.

All COVID-19 vaccines will be free to everyone in British Columbia.

For more details and a photo from today’s vaccinations at UHNBC, see this item on the NH Story Site: [Northern Health administers first COVID-19 vaccines in Prince George](#).

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, vaccine research, priority populations, and the provincial rollout plan, visit the Government of British Columbia’s [COVID-19 Vaccines website](#).

## BCCDC testing guidelines updated to include priority symptoms

The BCCDC has updated testing guidelines to reflect priority symptoms. People experiencing the following symptoms should seek a COVID-19 test right away:

- Fever or chills
- Cough (Either new onset or worsening/exacerbation of chronic cough)
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Difficulty breathing

People experiencing two or more of the following symptoms (not related to any other pre-existing conditions) for more than 24 hours should also seek a COVID-19 test:

- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

For those who have had close contact with a COVID-19 case, and have even a single symptom included above, testing is recommended.

To arrange for a test, contact your physician or nurse practitioner's office, or call the NH COVID-19 Online Clinic & Info Line at **1-844-645-7811**. More info is on the BCCD's [COVID-19 testing page](#).

## 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

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### Staying safer this holiday season

People who use drugs are at a high risk of harm during the holiday season. Coupled with COVID-19 isolation, the season brings additional risk of overdose deaths.

Please help prevent overdoses by having naloxone in the hands of anyone who might witness an overdose.

More information for people who use substances and how to stay safe during this pandemic can be found at:

- [Harm reduction information for people who use substances](#)
- [COVID-19 and Substance Use Over the Holiday Season](#)