



# COMMUNITY UPDATE

*The latest from Northern Health*

October 6, 2021

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## COVID-19

### Current health measures for COVID-19

As the holidays approach, it's important to remember:

- Personal gatherings in your home – one additional family or 5 guests
- Personal gatherings outside your home – maximum 50 people
- Indoor events – have a safety plan (the organizer should have a safety plan, but is not required to submit one for approval)
- Outside events – when more than 200 people, then have a safety plan

For more information, including COVID-19 safety plans templates, please see the [health measures introduced for Northern Health region](#).

### Proof of vaccine for long-term care facilities

Visitor policy for long-term care and all other health-care settings in B.C. is being updated. Starting October 12, 2021, visitors to long-term care and assisted-living facilities will need to show their vaccine card for proof of full immunization. Starting October 26, 2021, visitors to acute-care settings will also need to show they are fully vaccinated.

To read more, please visit the [October 5 daily COVID-19 update](#).

### Proof of vaccination and the BC Vaccine Card

The BC Vaccine Card is now the only acceptable proof of vaccination for British Columbians to enjoy certain businesses and recreational events safely.

For Northern Health, Environmental Public Health Team responds to incoming complaints related to the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) orders (face coverings and vaccine status, for

instance). The Environmental Public Health Team will reach out to non-compliant facilities to provide education, and then follow progressive enforcement processes that could include ticketing and potential closure orders.

For more information, please see the [proof of vaccination](#), and the [information for businesses](#) sites.

### **Northern Health residents can now book a COVID-19 test online!**

People in the North are currently directed to their primary care provider or to the NH Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic (VPCCC) to access a COVID-19 assessment and laboratory requisition. In the last month, COVID-19 cases have increased across the region, putting significant pressure on health care to respond.

To address this concern, starting October 4, 2021, symptomatic Northerners that require a COVID-19 test will be able to access an online NH COVID-19 Testing Request Form. This form will initiate the process for individuals to access a test at their preferred testing site. People can still continue to call the NH Virtual Clinic or contact their primary care provider for a COVID-19 assessment and test.

The website for the [COVID-19 test booking form](#) is now live, and will be shared with the public on the [Northern Health website](#) and social media channels.

### **Northern BC community immunization coverage**

Immunization coverage for every community in Northern Health is available for you on the [Northern BC community immunization coverage page](#). This link includes both first and second dose counts and percentages per community and is updated every week.

### **Vax for BC**

If you haven't got vaccinated yet or if it's been more than 28 days since your first dose, get vaccinated now at a drop-in, mobile or special event clinic. Roll up your sleeve and stop the spread of COVID-19.

Visit the [Vax for BC website](#) for more information.

### **Community Toolkit**

To empower local partners to share helpful information, we have created a [COVID-19 Community Toolkit](#) - a digital resource for community partners, which includes vaccine clinic information (including [clinic schedules](#)), a community guide, trusted information and links, and more!

### **BC vaccination coverage rates and COVID-19 activity**

#### **BCCDC COVID-19 dashboard**

Visit the BCCDC [COVID-19 surveillance dashboard](#) for information by local health area (LHA) and community health service area (CHSA).

## COVID-19 Numbers

As of October 5, **12,399** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **836**
- New cases: **87**
- Currently in hospital: **82**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **16**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **176**

For the latest provincial numbers, see the Province of BC [COVID-19 dashboard](#), which is updated Monday-Friday. The dashboard may not work in all browsers; Chrome is suggested.

As well, for a visual comparison of COVID-19 cases in BC by HSDA to other Canadian and global jurisdictions, see the [COVID-19 Epidemiology app](#). It's updated on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

- [BC COVID-19 pandemic update](#) – October 5, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – September 29, 2021

## Trusted links and resources for COVID-19

- [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 Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic: **1-844-645-7811**
- Northern Health Environmental Health Officer Line: **1-250-565-7322**
- 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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### Overdose alert for Prince George

There has been an increase in overdose events in Prince George. The reported substance is green and chalky. This substance is highly toxic, causes heavy and prolonged sedation, and requires more naloxone to reverse. Overdoses are happening when the substance is smoked and injected.

For more information, please see overdose alert information on the [Northern Health stories site](#).

For a printable poster, please visit the Northern Health [overdose prevention site](#).

## Illicit drug toxicity deaths for July 2021 now available (BC Coroners Report – released September 29)

Attached are the most recent Coroner Reports for Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths that contain data until the end of July 2021.

### Summary:

- July 2021 (N=184) was the second largest number of suspected deaths ever recorded in a month. June 2020 had more deaths. (N=186).
- The 1,204 suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths between January and July 2021 are the highest ever recorded in the first seven months of a calendar year and represent a 28% increase over the number of deaths recorded between January and July 2020 (941).
- In January to July 2021, VCH had the highest rate of illicit drug toxicity deaths in the province with a rate of 47 deaths per 100,000 individuals. Northern Health had the second highest rate of illicit drug toxicity deaths in the province with a rate of 46 deaths per 100,000 individuals

### Northern Health Summary

- NH saw 12 illicit drug toxicity deaths in July 2021 (35 deaths per 100,000 individuals)
  - **NW** has seen 23 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 51.9 deaths per 100,000 individuals, which is the third highest rate in the Province
    - There were 7 deaths in July
  - **NI** has seen 36 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 41.8 deaths per 100,000 individuals, which is the seventh highest rate in the Province.
    - There were 3 deaths in July
  - **NE** has seen 18 illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 for a rate of 46.9 deaths per 100,000 individuals, which is the sixth highest rate in the Province.
    - There were 2 deaths in July

These reports can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#)

## Organizational news

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### October 1-7 is Breastfeeding Week in Canada

Celebrate with us! This year's theme is "Protect Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility". When needed, timely and skilled support can help to get feeding off to a good start. This month, read [Northern Health Stories](#) about health professionals who support clients with breastfeeding.

However, protecting breastfeeding goes beyond the work of health care providers. "Shared responsibility" speaks to how members of our communities *all* have a role to play in protecting, promoting, and support breastfeeding.

How can you get involved?

- **Child care providers:** How can your program welcome and normalize breastfeeding? For ideas, see [Breastfeeding is easier with support: What child care providers can do](#)
- **Teachers/educators:** For younger grades, teach about how mammals feed their babies; for older grades, explore societal influences on infant feeding
- **Employers:** Accommodate staff to nurse or express their milk at work. See relevant policies and guidelines from the [City of Toronto](#) and the [City of Vancouver](#)
- **Businesses:** Welcome families to breastfeed any time, anywhere. Learn more: [Breastfeeding-friendly spaces: Make breastfeeding your business](#)