



COMMUNITY UPDATE

The latest from Northern Health

February 16, 2022

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COVID-19 Restriction updates

COVID-19 Restrictions that are changing

Starting February 16 at 11:59 pm, many restrictions will be eased. With proof of vaccination and masks, these activities can return to normal.

- No restrictions on indoor and outdoor personal gatherings
- Full capacity allowed for:
 - Indoor and outdoor organized events
 - Indoor events at venues
 - Exercise and fitness, adult sports activities, tournaments and swimming pools
- Full capacity and fewer restrictions in restaurants, bars, pubs and nightclubs:
 - No limits on table size
 - Normal liquor service hours
 - Customers don't have to remain seated
- Dancing is allowed when wearing a mask indoors

Masks continue to be required in all public indoor settings for all people born in 2017 or earlier (5+). Proof of full vaccination also continues to be required to access some events, services, and businesses in BC.

For more information about all orders, and mask and proof of vaccination, please see the [Government of BC website](#).

Overdose prevention and response

Coroner Reports for Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths up to December 2021

Provincial Summary:

- November 2021 and December 2021 saw the two largest numbers of suspected deaths ever recorded in a month, which equates to approximately seven deaths per day
- In 2021, VCH had the highest rate of illicit drug toxicity deaths in the province with a rate of 49 deaths per 100,000 individuals.

For specific regional information, please refer to the following tables from the [Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths in BC report](#):

- Table 13: Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths by Month of Death and Health Authority and Township, 2020-2021 (page 14)
- Table 14: Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths by Health Services Delivery Area (HSDA), 2011-2021 (page 15)
- Table 15: Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths by HSDA and Month, 2021 (page 16)
- Table 16: Illicit Drug Toxicity Death Rates by Health Services Delivery Area per 100,000, 2011-2021 (page 17)
- Table 17: Illicit Drug Toxicity Death Rates (per 100,000 person-years) by Top Local Health Areas (LHA) in 2021, 2016-2021 (pages 18-20)

The full reports can be found here:

- [Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths in BC January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2021](#)
- [Illicit Drug Toxicity Type of Drug Data Data to December 31, 2021](#)

We continue to see illicit toxicity deaths primarily in private and other residences. There have been **no deaths at supervised consumption or drug overdose prevention sites**. There is **no indication that prescribed safe supply is contributing to illicit drug deaths**.

Fentanyl and analogues continue to be detected in over 80% of deaths, and there has been an increase of benzodiazepines found in illicit substances making it difficult to respond to drug poisonings/overdoses.

Further resources

- [Benzos with Opioids](#)
- [Fentanyl | Toward the Heart](#)

COVID-19 Information and updates

COVID-19 testing and self-isolation

Guidance for [when to get a COVID-19 test](#) has been updated.

A COVID-19 test is not recommended if:

- You have no symptoms, even if you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive
- You are fully vaccinated (two doses), experiencing mild symptoms and can manage your illness at home. Self-isolate for five days. Notify your close contacts so they can self-monitor for symptoms

A COVID-19 test is recommended if:

- You have symptoms, and:
 - You are at higher risk of severe illness
 - You identify with a high-risk setting - such as health care workers, first responders, residents of congregate settings, or live in a remote or rural community

For more information, including how to get a test, and information about rapid test use, please see the [Northern Health Stories site](#).

Access/assessment for the rapid tests is only available through the following options:

- A requisition sent from a primary care provider
- Calling the NH Virtual Clinic at 1-844-645-7811
- Completion of the NH COVID-19 Test Booking

Note: Patients with mild symptoms will be asked to stay home and self-isolate, and will not be provided with a rapid test based on their symptoms and risk factors.

Patients who require testing (dependant on symptoms and risk factors) will be referred to a test site for a PCR test or to pick up a take-home rapid test. Most tests will be PCR. A friend, family member, etc. may pick up the take-home rapid test on the patient's behalf. Availability of rapid tests may be limited at times, depending on supply.

Get your booster (if eligible):

Boosters are the health care system's best defense against COVID-19 because the vaccine becomes less effective over time. The booster returns, and even improves, vaccine effectiveness from shortly after when you received Dose 2. Boosters help protect our seniors, who are most likely to experience severe illness and hospitalization as a result of COVID-19 infection. **If or when you are eligible (6 months after Dose 2), please [book your booster immediately](#).** For more information on Omicron and the importance of getting your booster dose, check out "[Omicron Wave COVID-19](#)", a presentation by Medical Health Officer Dr. Corneil.

COVID-19 treatments in BC

Northern Health has established a process for access to anti-viral COVID-19 treatments for high-risk groups. Therapeutic treatments for COVID-19 have been approved for use outside hospitals. These treatments do not stop you from getting COVID-19. They are used to prevent

severe illness in people who are at higher risk from COVID-19. To be effective, they must be taken within five to seven days of developing symptoms. If you have received a notice that you are clinically extremely vulnerable for COVID-19, and you receive a positive COVID-19 test result, please contact your primary care provider for more information.

Visit the [Government of BC](#) and [British Columbia Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#) websites for more information about COVID-19 treatments.

Proof of vaccination

By order of the Provincial Health Officer, proof of full vaccination is required to access some events, services and businesses in BC. This requirement has been extended until June 30, 2022.

Proof of vaccination requirements apply to all people born in 2010 or earlier (12+) and covers access to many events and places, such as concerts, restaurants, swimming pools, indoor tickets sporting events, and others. Detailed information can be found on the [Province of BC website](#).

Youth aged 12 to 18

Youth aged 12 to 18 can carry their own BC Vaccine Card, or have a trusted adult carry it for them. Youth are not required to show valid government photo ID.

- 12 year olds only need to show proof of 1 dose of vaccine
- 13 to 18 year olds need to show proof of 2 doses of vaccine

Children aged 5 to 11

Children aged 5 to 11 are not required to show proof of vaccination.

COVID-19 vaccine

Please visit the [BCCDC COVID-19 vaccine website](#) for information about: vaccine doses (first, second, third, booster, and pediatric), vaccine registration and eligibility, vaccines and children, getting a vaccine, vaccine safety, vaccine considerations (including pregnancy), proof of vaccination, and more.

Please note that vaccination doses may be by appointment only, not walk-ins. Please see the [Northern Health COVID-19 immunization clinic page](#) for more information for your community.

Update on vaccination requirement for health professionals

In follow-up to the notice given to health professionals in October 2021, the provincial health officer is finalizing, in consultation with all health professional colleges, an order that requires all regulated health professionals to be vaccinated by March 24, 2022, to work in their occupation in British Columbia.

Under the order, regulated health professionals who are vaccinated with one dose before March 24, 2022, may continue to work as long as they receive a second dose 28-35 days after their first dose.

To read more about this order, including the health care professionals now included, please see [the Government of BC website](#).

Northern BC community immunization coverage

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

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 February 15, **27, 384** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- New cases: **145**
- Currently in hospital: **52**
 - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **15**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **295**

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.

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](#) – February 14, 2022
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – February 10, 2022

Trusted links and resources for COVID-19

- [Northern Health online booking form - COVID-19 test](#)
- [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](#).

Organizational news

Constructions cameras let you see some of Northern Health's major project sites

Northern Health has set up construction cameras for two of our major capital projects. These cameras allow residents to watch how quickly things change and progress on big renovation and construction projects.

Any day, any time, you can see what the construction site looks like, and what progress has been made to date on the Mills Memorial Hospital Replacement Project in Terrace and the GR Baker Memorial Hospital Redevelopment in Quesnel.

To read more, and to see more images, please visit the [Northern Health Stories website](#).

For general information and updates about these and other renovation and construction projects Northern Health has on the go, go to the [Let's Talk Northern Health website](#) – an online platform that Northern Health launched in 2020 to keep you informed about capital projects, and to get your feedback on those projects. On the Let's Talk site, each project has its own project page, with links to construction cams.