



# COMMUNITY UPDATE

*The latest from Northern Health*

March 10, 2022

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## COVID-19 Restriction updates

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### Many COVID-19 restrictions are lifting or changing

Effective March 11, 2022:

- Masks no longer required in public indoor settings under a public health order
- Long-term care visitation restored (with precautions)
- Faith gathering capacity limits lifted
- Overnight child and youth camp Order lifted
- Childcare guidelines revised
- K-12 school guidelines revised (changes effective on return from Spring Break)

Effective April 8, 2022:

- BC Vaccine Card no longer required in most settings
- Businesses transition from COVID-19 safety plan to communicable disease plan
- Post-secondary residence vaccine requirement lifted

Please visit the [BC Government website](#) for more information.

## COVID-19 Information and updates

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### COVID-19 testing and self-isolation

Wondering [when to get a COVID-19 test?](#)

For most people:

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

Publicly funded [rapid antigen testing kits](#) are available for residents of BC 70 years and older who have a Personal Health Number (PHN). A test should only be used by people who develop symptoms of COVID-19 and want to confirm a positive or negative result. The tests are not suitable for international travel requirements.

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 form](#)
- Rapid tests are also available for specific age groups at BC pharmacies. [Find more information on eligibility and availability near you](#)

**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. **Do not go to the emergency room for a COVID-19 test.**

### **COVID-19 vaccine and booster**

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.

### **COVID-19 booster**

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. **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.

### **Novavax/Nuvaxovid COVID-19 vaccine**

Health Canada has recently approved the protein-based [Novavax/Nuvaxovid](#) COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine is approved for people who are 18 years of age and older. Its safety and effectiveness in people younger than 18 years of age have not yet been established.

It is not yet available for use, but people interested in this vaccine can call [1-833-838-2323](tel:1-833-838-2323) for more information and to request this vaccine.

### **Online screening tool for COVID-19 treatments available now**

An online screening tool and virtual assessment service is available for people with a positive COVID-19 test to see if they are eligible for COVID-19 antiviral treatments and to go on to receive treatment.

British Columbians can now find out if these treatments are right for them through this new virtual service by following the four-step process available online ([www.gov.bc.ca/covidtreatments](http://www.gov.bc.ca/covidtreatments)), starting with a self-assessment. A physician and pharmacist team will decide if treatment is safe and appropriate as part of this process.

Paxlovid and Sotrovimab treatments are not suitable for everyone and must be prescribed by a health care provider who can assess interactions with other conditions or medications. Some patients may not be able to receive treatment if they are already taking some other medications.

To access this tool, and for more information, please visit the [BC Government COVID-19 treatments page](#).

### **Treatment for eligible individuals who test positive for COVID-19**

**If you test positive for COVID-19, you may be eligible for specific anti-viral treatments if you:**

- Received a clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) letter
- Are being actively treated for cancer
- Have received an organ transplant
- Have cystic fibrosis or severe renal disease
- Are moderately or severely immunocompromised

- Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated people who have certain chronic health conditions or identify as Indigenous

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.

**To access these treatments:**

Contact your health care provider, doctor or specialist as soon as you know you are positive for COVID-19 and ask if you are eligible for specific treatments.

To learn more about COVID-19 treatments, visit the [BCCDC COVID-19 treatments page](#).

**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 March 9, **28, 831** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- New cases: **29**
- Currently in hospital: **32**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **5**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **318**

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](#) – March 9, 2022
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – March 3, 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](#).

## Overdose prevention and response

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### Stigma reduction as an overdose prevention measure

Stigma against people who use drugs (PWUD) results in discrimination, impacts health, and contributes to overdoses. In 2021, BC saw the highest number of illicit drug toxicity deaths ever recorded. Northern Health had the second highest rate in the province with 48 deaths per 100,000 people. Treating people who use substances with respect improves health outcomes and helps save lives.

There are several anti-stigma resources and education materials available both regionally and provincially:

- The [Compassionate Action](#) is an anti-stigma campaign that offers five modules with a series of interactive case study videos. These videos build upon the [Compassionate Engagement](#) modules, and are designed to engage PWUD and people who provide services, encouraging collaboration and respect. The videos highlight where PWUD often experience stigma and discrimination, and are based on real life experiences.
- The [Beyond Stigma video](#), released by [Subject Matter Research Lab](#), is about stigma and seeking medical attention with opioid use disorder.
- Toward the Heart, the BCCDC, and the Provincial Health Services Authority have produced a document about [respectful language and stigma regarding people who use substances](#).

Northern Health resources:

- [Stigma](#) – Stop stigma, save lives
- [Creating supportive health care environments for people that use substances](#) course on LearningHub

## Organizational news

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### **New life sciences investment helps build stronger BC**

More British Columbians and people around the world will benefit from the life-changing work of BC's world-renowned life sciences sector thanks to a significant investment in health research.

As announced in Budget 2022 and aligned with the StrongerBC Economic Plan commitment to position the province as a hub for life sciences and biomanufacturing, the Province is providing nearly \$195 million in grant funding to Michael Smith Health Research BC (Health Research BC) and Genome BC.

To continue reading, and for more information, please visit the [BC Government website](#).