



COVID-19

**A Northern Health
guide for you and your
community**



northern health
the northern way of caring

This document will be updated as
new information becomes available.

NH Communications
June 2021



A message from Northern Health

These are uncertain times and many Northerners are feeling anxious or worried. As your health authority, we wanted to let you know what we're doing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also want to talk about the vital role that we all have in preventing infection and slowing the spread, so we can all stay as safe as possible.

As well, we wanted to make sure you had the latest information on the COVID-19 vaccines.

This guide is intended for Northerners and their families, municipalities, community groups, businesses, and other organizations.

Please share this guide with friends and family, and stay connected with Northern Health for up-to-date and reliable information for your community.



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www.northernhealth.ca



Note:

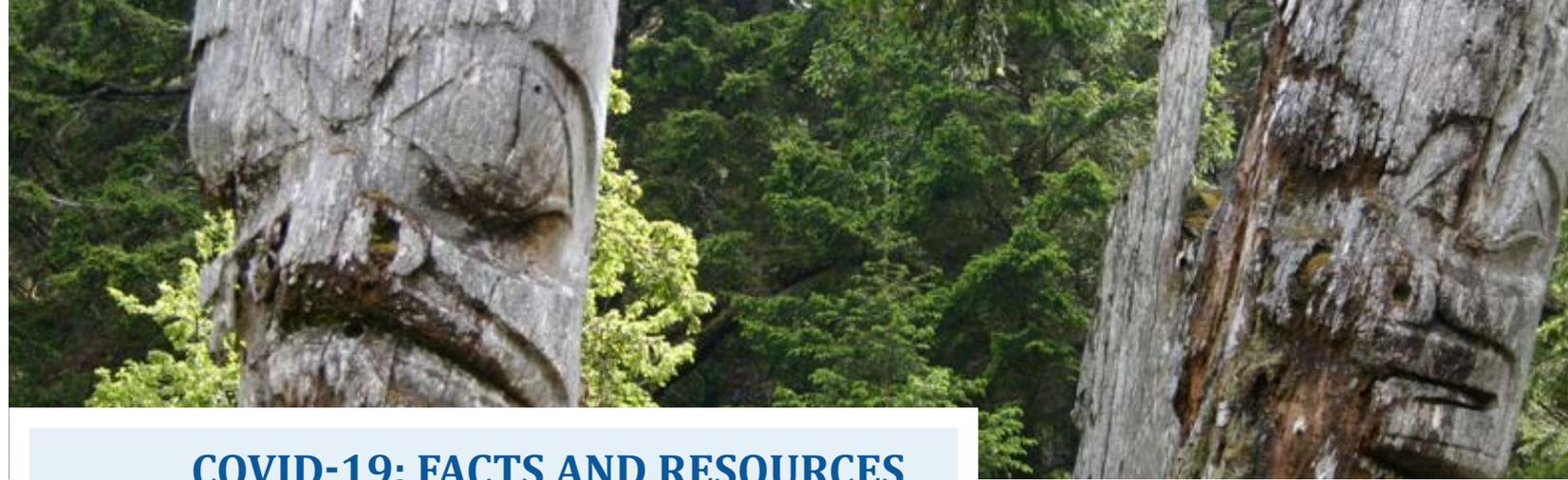
The COVID-19 pandemic is a rapidly evolving situation; this resource may become out of date. If in doubt, please check bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19

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COVID-19: FACTS AND RESOURCES

What is COVID-19?

In late 2019, a new coronavirus emerged, eventually leading to a global pandemic throughout 2020 and into 2021.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to those of other respiratory infections, including the flu. COVID-19 symptoms can include some or all of the following:

- Cough
- Fever
- Breathing difficulties
- Headache
- Generalized muscle pain
- Sore throat

Some people with the infection will have mild symptoms, or none at all, but they can still spread the virus to others – who might develop more severe symptoms.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads mainly through tiny drops of saliva or discharge from the nose or mouth when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

This means it's very important to cough or sneeze into your elbow, or into a tissue.

How serious is it?

About 81% of cases are mild, and 19% are serious. “Serious” means the person has to go into hospital. Of those 19%, 5% need intensive care and ventilator support (a machine to take over breathing for the patient while their body fights the virus). The death rate is about 2.5% worldwide, but this is higher in areas where the health care system is overwhelmed.

This is not like the flu. This is much more serious.

Who's most at risk of severe illness?

People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus. People over 70, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease) are more likely to be severely ill.

What's the risk in pregnancy?

Based on the evidence we have so far, pregnant women are no more likely to get COVID-19 than the general population.

Some women's bodies handle viral infections differently when they're pregnant. This is something midwives and obstetricians have known for many years and are used to dealing with.

Currently, there's no evidence that pregnant women who get COVID-19 are more at risk of serious complications than anybody else. However, there's not much evidence available, so if you're pregnant, please take extra care.

For more information, check www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID-19_vaccine/COVID19_Vaccine_Perinatal.pdf

General information and trusted websites

If you have any questions or concerns, call the Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic for Northern BC residents at **1-844-645-7811**.

As well, the BC COVID-19 app is now available on the Apple App Store and Google Play (for Android). You can self-assess for COVID-19, and the app will also send you the latest updates, trusted resources, and alerts.

Also, BC has a self-assessment website – bc.thrive.health – to help people decide whether they need assessment or testing for COVID-19.

Printable posters

To order printable posters, visit northernhealth.ca/health-topics/coronavirus-information-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-resources



Trusted websites:

- northernhealth.ca/health-topics/coronavirus-information-covid-19
- bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19
- bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/common-questions
- who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-acoronaviruses
- canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/canadas-reponse.html
- bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/translatedcontent

Resources in other languages



UBC Department of Emergency Medicine

digem.med.ubc.ca/covid-19-multilingual-resources

- Chinese
- South Asian
- Farsi
- Korean
- Italian



Fraser Health

fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/coronavirus/coronavirus---resources#.XouMpZDws2x

- Farsi
- Hindi
- Korean
- Punjabi
- Simplified Chinese



sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1586548069915/1586548087539

- Cree
- Inuktitut
- Michif
- Dene
- and more



I THINK I HAVE COVID-19

Should I get tested?

You can get tested if you have symptoms of the flu, a cold, or COVID-19 – even if your symptoms are mild.

However, not everyone needs a test. If you have no symptoms, you shouldn't get tested.

To find out if you need a test:

- Use BC's online COVID-19 assessment tool at <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en>
- Try the free BC COVID-19 app, which includes assessment
- Call your doctor or nurse practitioner
- Call the Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic at 1-844-645-7811

For more information, visit the BCCDC page "When to get tested": bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/When_to_get_tested.pdf

If you have questions, or if your symptoms get worse, contact your doctor or nurse practitioner, or call 8-1-1.

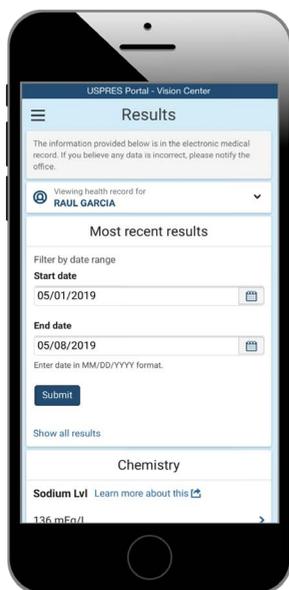


If you develop severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or chest pain, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency department.

How do I get tested?

To arrange for a test, contact your doctor or nurse practitioner, or call the Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic at 1-844-645-7811.

How will I get my test results, and how long will it take?



Most people get their results by text message, phone, or through an online service. One Northern Health service is HealthElife (northernhealth.ca/services/digital-health/healthelife), which gives you 24/7 secure access to your COVID-19 test results and other health information, from any computer or smartphone.

The time it takes to get your test results can vary because of factors like transportation times, but the average time in the North has been about 30 hours. This can also vary due to the individual circumstances of the person seeking a test, or because of testing capacity. Some tests are sent to provincial labs, while others are processed locally.

We know that waiting for your test results can be frustrating, but it's very important to keep self-isolating while you wait, because you might be infectious to others.

What happens if I test positive for COVID-19?

If your test result is positive for COVID-19, you should:

- Self-isolate for 10 days from the first day you felt sick
- Connect with your Primary Care Provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner)
- If you don't have a Primary Care Provider, call the Virtual Clinic and info line: **1-844-645-7811**
- If, at any time, you are feeling unwell and are worried this might be an emergency due to severe difficulty breathing or chest pain, call 9-1-1 (or your local emergency service). Emergency departments are available to those who need them.

Northern Health's Public Health team will call you soon after you get your lab result (the same day or the next day). During this call, Public Health will review information about your symptom onset, where you have been, and who your close contacts are. It is possible that you may know your COVID-19 result ahead of this call. It is helpful if you can reflect on where you have been and who you have seen in the two weeks prior to the day your symptoms started.

Answering questions in your call with Public Health is optional. Information you share with public health is confidential, and information will only be shared with health professionals involved in your care. Your complete honesty will help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Public health is calling to support you and will not blame, shame, or report you.

For more information for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts, visit:

- Self-Isolation (bccdc.ca): www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation
- Close contacts (bccdc.ca): www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation/close-contacts
- Testing and self-isolation information (Northern Health): www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/covid-19-information#trusted-info

Will Northern Health follow up with my contacts?

As of May 5, Northern Health resumed full contact tracing for all close contacts of people with COVID-19. Northern Health calls all identified close contacts.

Northern Health staff call all close contacts to:

- a. Notify them of their exposure to COVID-19
- b. Provide information on self-isolating
- c. Provide information on what to do if they develop symptoms

Who is a close contact?

A close contact is someone you were in close contact with during your infectious period, which started two days before your symptoms started or your test date, if you were asymptomatic. They typically include people that:

- You live with.
- That you had direct physical contact with.
- Who you spent longer than 15 minutes with, while not consistently physically distancing (i.e. you were less than 2 meters apart).
- Note that if you have a rental suite in your home, this is considered a separate residence. This means that if you have to self-isolate, the people in the rental suite don't necessarily have to.

How long should I self-isolate for?

When you self-isolate, you stay home and avoid contact with other people. This important step helps reduce the spread of COVID-19.

For information about who needs to self-isolate, the length of time you will need to self-isolate in your situation, and steps you can take to keep yourself and others healthy, please see the BCCDC's self-isolation page: [Self-Isolation](#). This information will also be reviewed with the Public Health team when they call you.



STOPPING THE SPREAD: HAND-WASHING, DISTANCING, MASKS, AND MORE

Six ways you can avoid getting and spreading the virus

1

Practice physical distancing.

Physical distancing saves lives by reducing the chance you will become infected. It also slows the spread of infection, so Northern Health has a better chance of keeping up. It's everyone's responsibility to practice social distancing, whether you have symptoms or not.

- Avoid close contact with other people. Keep at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from them.
- Avoid public transport – buses, taxis, ridesharing.
- Work from home if you can – speak to your employer about this.
- Avoid social activities such as going to cafes, pubs, restaurants, or movie theatres.
- Avoid going on children's playdates, such as going to a playground or park.
- Don't have visitors to your home. This includes friends and family (other than the family members you live with).
- Don't go to your doctor's office without phoning ahead.
- If you have questions, call your family doctor or nurse practitioner. You can also call the Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic at 1-844-645-7811.

2

Wear a mask

In most indoor public settings, you must wear a mask. Many people who have COVID-19 have no symptoms. Masks are one way you can help keep others safe, as well as protecting yourself. For more details, see the section on masks on page 11, or visit bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks.

3

Wash your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds.
- Always wash your hands when you get home or arrive at work.

4

Use hand sanitizer

- If soap and water are unavailable, use hand sanitizer.

5

Use coughing etiquette

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow, or into a tissue.
- Put used tissues in the garbage immediately, and then wash your hands.

6

Avoid touching your face

- Try not to touch your face, eyes, nose, or mouth.

Masks help protect everyone

Masks are required for everyone in most indoor public places.

Masks have an important role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Masks act as a barrier and help stop the spread of droplets from a person's mouth and nose when talking, laughing, yelling, singing, coughing, or sneezing.

Wearing a mask should be combined with other important protective measures such as frequent hand-washing and physical distancing. A mask is not enough on its own to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The information above comes from the BCCDC. For more, including when and how to wear a mask, see bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks

What is a mask?

A mask or face covering is defined as a medical or non-medical mask that covers the nose and mouth. Face shields are not a substitute for masks, because face shields have an opening below the mouth.



How to properly wear a mask

A properly fitted mask sits closely over the mouth, nose, cheeks and chin of the person wearing it.



- It's important to make sure the mask can be held in place comfortably with ties or ear loops to reduce the need to adjust the mask. If it isn't comfortable, you won't want to wear it consistently.
- Masks should be used by only one person and should never be shared.
- Wash or sanitize your hands before and after putting on or taking off a mask.

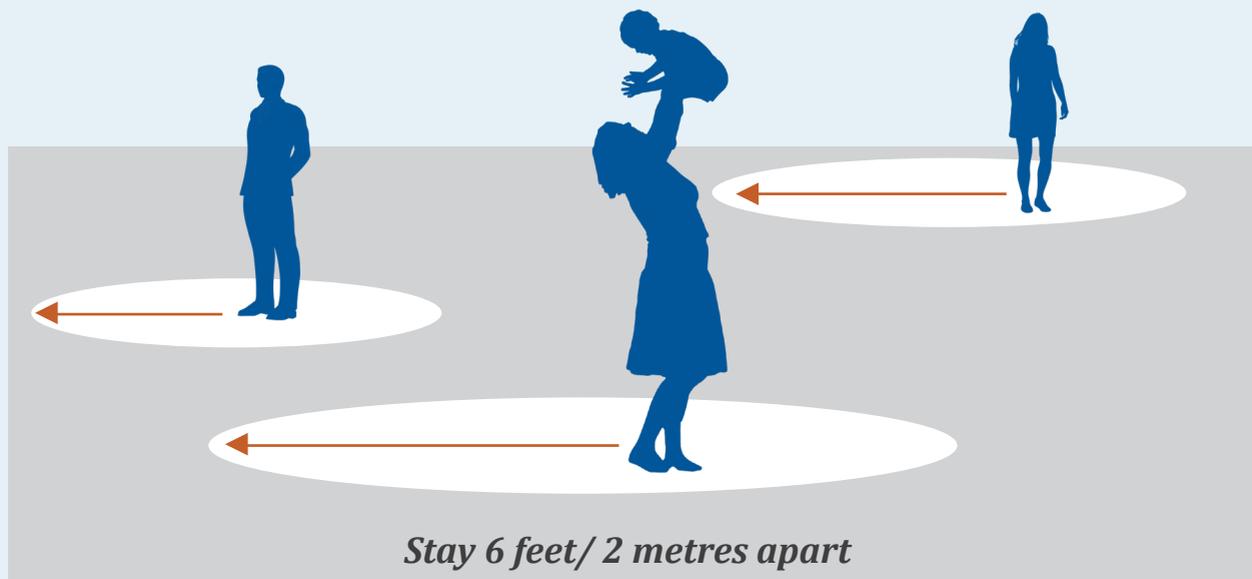
For more, see the BCCDC's "How to wear a face mask": bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_SurgicalMaskPoster.pdf

Who's exempt from wearing a mask?

The following types of people don't have to wear masks:

- Children under 12 years of age
- People who can't wear a mask. This might be due to a psychological, behavioural, or health condition, or a physical, cognitive, or mental impairment. People who can't put on or remove a mask without help from others
- People who need to remove their masks to communicate because of another person's hearing impairment

Tips for physical distancing



We're asking you to avoid physical contact with people outside your home, including those you love and enjoy spending time with.

- We know this will be difficult, especially for people who are already isolated. Some tips:
- Use technology to connect remotely.
- Set elderly family members up with technology to allow for video calls, such as Zoom or Facetime.
- Ask your elderly or vulnerable family members, neighbours, and friends if you can drop groceries off (on their front porch) for them.
- Neighbourhood Facebook or WhatsApp groups can help people connect and look after each other.
- Check out the cards at the end of this booklet. If you like, leave some on the front steps of houses along your street to offer help to those who are staying at home.

How long will we need to be physically distant?

We all need to follow the recommendations of our public health officer, health authorities, and government. Right now, it's everyone's responsibility to slow the spread.

We don't know the timeline yet, but you can count on Northern Health to keep you informed.

Physical distancing: What's safe and what's not



Avoid:

- Group gatherings
- Visits to bars/ restaurants
- Sleepovers
- Playdates
- Visiting the elderly with children
- Crowded retail stores
- Gyms
- Having visitors to your home
- Having non-essential workers in your home



Use caution:

- Visits to supermarkets
- Visits to the pharmacy
- Visits to your doctor
- Travelling
- Checking on friends and family
- Public transport



Safe:

- Going for a walk
- Running
- Working in the home
- Home improvement projects
- Reading
- Going for a drive
- Video calls
- Phone calls





NEW NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES HELP YOU STAY PHYSICALLY DISTANT

Northern Health has developed several new services (www.northernhealth.ca/health-information/primary-and-community-care) to make it easier to stay safe and healthy. For example, you can avoid waiting rooms or check your COVID-19 test results online. See below for details about specific programs—all of them are free.

Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic

Call the Virtual Clinic to receive primary and community care services over video or telephone. These include services you would normally receive from your family doctor or nurse practitioner.

- 1-844-645-7811
- 10 am to 10 pm daily (including weekends and statutory holidays)

The Virtual Clinic was previously the COVID-19 Online Clinic, but the name was changed to the Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic when Northern Health expanded the clinic to offer a wider variety of medical services.

The Virtual Clinic works with your family doctor, nurse practitioner, and health care team to complement the care you receive in your community, or to provide support for those who don't have a family doctor or nurse practitioner.

The Virtual Clinic is for:

- People who don't have a family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- People who need care on weekends, after their health centre is closed, or are unable to travel to receive care due to seasonal weather. **(You're encouraged to call your family doctor or nurse practitioner first, or the urgent and primary care centre in your community: www.northernhealth.ca/locations/all?keys=urgent+and+primary+care+centre)**

Call the Virtual Clinic if you or a family member are experiencing:

- Asthma
- Ear aches
- Eye irritation/injuries

- Feelings of anxiety, sadness, or depression
- Headache
- Mild back pain
- Mild breathing difficulties or shortness of breath
- Minor burns, skin rashes and infections
- Sore throat or worsening cough
- Sprains caused by minor accidents and falls
- Symptoms of COVID-19 (www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms)
- Urinary tract infections
- Vomiting, diarrhea or dehydration
- A need for support around substance use treatment such as Opioid Agonist Therapy, or safer pharmaceutical alternatives to street drugs

Other options for health information and advice are still available, including calling your primary care provider, or contacting HealthLink BC (8-1-1) at any time.

Don't call the Virtual Clinic phone line in an emergency. Instead, go to the emergency department or call 9-1-1 (or local emergency services in your community).

Can I still meet with my doctor or nurse practitioner in person?

Absolutely! This is your choice. You can schedule a face-to-face appointment with your health care provider at any time. You can also call the Virtual Clinic after-hours but continue to see your regular health care provider when they are available.

HealthElife lets you check lab results and other tests online

HealthElife is a patient portal that lets you take a more active role in your health care. Using HealthElife, you can see your health information, such as test results, from visits to a Northern Health hospital.

Empowering people to access their own health information is part of Northern Health's commitment to improving the health care for Northerners. HealthElife gives you another way to access your health care information, helping you stay informed and educated on your health.

However, it's important to know that this tool is optional. If you like, you can still go to hospital you received care at to get your test results – you don't have to use HealthElife.

HealthElife is now available for all Northern Health residents. For more information, contact the health information department at your local hospital or visit northernhealth.ca/healthelife.



What's the difference between MyHealthKey and HealthElife?

- HealthElife has information related to your visits to Northern Health hospitals or labs.
- MyHealthKey (coming in 2021) will have information related to your visits to clinics run by Northern Health.

Who can use HealthElife?

HealthElife is available to all Northern Health residents who receive care at a Northern Health hospital.

Why can't I see information from my family doctor's office in HealthElife,

such as tests results or my scheduled doctor's appointments?

Your family doctor is probably using their own electronic medical record system that's not connected to Northern Health. Please contact them to ask if they have a patient portal you can use.

If your family doctor operates out of a clinic run by Northern Health, you'll be able to view your health information through MyHealthKey (see next page) when it's released.

NH Check In lets you track your place in line

Do you need to go to the lab? Wondering how long you'll have to wait in line?

Save your spot in line using the free NH Check In app! While you wait safely in your home, office, or car, you'll get live updates on how fast the line's moving.

NOTE: NH Check In isn't for making appointments, it's for tracking your place in line and knowing what the current wait time is. Using it is optional.

To use NH Check In on your phone, computer, or tablet, go to northernhealth.ca/services/virtual-health/nhcheckin

Prefer to do things in person? Come on in and we'll add you to our safe virtual lineup!

Who do I call if I have trouble downloading the NH Check In app?

Call 1-800-735-1436. This will take you to ICS USA, the company that developed NH Check In.

Can I make an appointment using the NH Check In app/website?

No, you can't. NH Check In isn't for making appointments, it's for tracking your place in line after you already have an appointment (scheduled or walk-in). To make

appointments, you still need to phone or go in person, as before. NH Check In lets hospital staff know you've arrived, and it also lets you check your wait time in real time. You don't have to use NH Check In, though – it's optional.

I don't have a smartphone; why do I have to use NH Check In to make appointments?

Please see the answer above – NH Check In isn't for making appointments, it's for tracking your wait time for an appointment you already have (scheduled or walk-in). If you don't have a smartphone, you can use NH Check In from your computer – go to NHCheckIn.ca. And again, using NH Check In is optional.

What if I don't have a computer or smartphone?

Using NH Check In is optional. If you don't have a computer or smart phone, go to the site in the usual way. Some sites will have a kiosk that you can use to check in, or a staff member screener to help you.

Am I still allowed to wait in the waiting room if I can't use NH Check In, or if I don't want to?

Yes, you can still wait in waiting rooms if you prefer, depending on the facility's protocols. There will be safety measures in place to ensure safe physical distancing for everyone.

I can't find NH Check In in my community – why not?

NH Check In is being rolled out gradually across the North. We'll be adding more sites and services.

Is this the same program that LifeLabs uses?

NH Check In is similar to the Life Labs "Save My Spot" program, but it's not exactly the same – it has been customized for Northern Health.

Can I check in on somebody else's behalf – e.g., for an elderly parent?

Yes. Please note that any messages and wait time updates will be sent to the mobile phone or computer that was used to check in. You can't forward or share NH Check In information with other phones or computers.

Do I have to wait close to where the appointment will happen?

Ideally, you would check in about 30 minutes before arriving at the facility, but this will depend on your community and how far away you live.

More NH services are coming to help you stay safe

These are just some of the digital health services currently being developed by Northern Health. All will empower you to be more involved in your own health care and will make it easier for you to access your health care information online, safely, and privately.

- **MyHealthKey** will have information related to your visits to clinics run by Northern Health.
- **Safercare** is a wide-ranging project to digitize all hospital healthcare information.



ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINES



What is the covid-19 vaccine?

The vaccine helps your immune system produce antibodies that will keep you from getting sick if you're exposed to the virus.

Why is it important to get a covid-19 vaccination?

- **The vaccines work** – COVID-19 vaccines provide excellent protection against the virus that causes COVID-19 – preventing up to 95% of infections.
- **The vaccines will save lives** – The vaccine protects you and the people around you, too. The more people that are vaccinated, the harder it is for COVID-19 to spread.
- **The vaccines are safe** – s Just like all vaccines approved for use in Canada, the COVID-19 vaccines have been rigorously tested and carefully reviewed by Health Canada.

Protecting Northerners is the priority

COVID-19 immunizations began in Northern BC at the end of December 2020. Northern Health strongly recommends that Northerners choose to get the vaccine to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their communities.

Even with the COVID-19 vaccines, we still need to follow all the orders and guidelines for public health and safety. This will help keep us all safe. For more information, visit northernhealth.ca.



Can a COVID-19 vaccine make me sick with COVID-19?

NO. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently approved in Canada contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.



Can I still catch COVID-19 after I get the vaccine?

PERHAPS. After your first dose, it takes about two weeks for peak immunity to develop. For example, if you're exposed to COVID-19 on the day you're vaccinated, you might still get sick. As well, the COVID vaccines are 90-95% effective, which means that 5-10% of people could still catch COVID-19, even though they've been vaccinated.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine change my DNA?

NO. The mRNA vaccines definitely can't change a person's DNA. There are three reasons we know this can't happen; to learn more, visit Immunize BC's COVID-19 FAQs page at immunizebc.ca/covid-19-vaccinefrequently-askedquestions.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines have human and animal cells or blood products?

NO. Animal and human cell cultures may be used in the process of making some vaccines, but the vaccines themselves don't contain animal or human cells or tissue.



I've already had COVID-19; do I still need to get the vaccine?

YES, If you've been diagnosed with COVID-19, you should still get the vaccine once you've recovered. This is because you may not be immune to the virus that causes COVID-19, and you could get infected again. Please wait to get the vaccine until public health has told you that you no longer need to isolate. It's important that you wait the full isolation period, so you don't expose people at your vaccination clinic to the virus.

The COVID-19 vaccines were developed so quickly – are we sure they're safe?

YES. It's much safer to get the vaccine than to get COVID-19. The vaccine was developed quickly, but no corners were cut, and all the correct processes were followed (as with any other vaccine) to ensure the vaccine is safe for all Canadians.

Can you still spread COVID-19 if you've been vaccinated?

YES. The vaccine will protect you from getting sick with COVID-19, but you can still carry it and give it to others even if you were immunized. We're learning more about this, but in the meantime, we need to keep wearing masks and practicing physical distancing.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine have side effects?

PERHAPS. They might include soreness, redness and swelling at the spot where you got the injection; tiredness, headache, fever, chills, muscle or joint soreness; and nausea and vomiting. These reactions are mild and usually last 1 to 2 days.

About 1 in a million people can have a reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue, or lips.

This is why we ask you to wait 15 minutes before leaving, after any vaccinations.

Is the vaccine safe if I'm pregnant or breastfeeding?

The Canadian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, and public health experts in BC all agree that the vaccine is safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women. If you have questions, talk to your health care provider.

How will I know when it's my turn to get vaccinated?

Step 1: Register online

First, you register and get a confirmation number. You need that number to later book your vaccination appointment. Registering also helps health authorities request the right amount of vaccine doses for each community. Register using this link: www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/

Step 2: Book an appointment

Once you have registered, you will be notified when you become eligible to book an appointment. This is based on your age and the provincial Immunization Plan phases. Your notification will include instructions on how to book, which will be done online or by phone.

Step 3: Get the vaccine

Visit the clinic to get your vaccine dose. People who get their first vaccine dose will be notified by email, text, or phone when they are eligible to book an appointment for their second dose.

A provincial call centre (1-833-838-2323) is available for people who do not have a Personal Health Number or need more help making an appointment. This service is available in 140 languages.



I don't know when my second dose will be available; is it still worthwhile to get the first dose?

YES. Even if you only get the first dose, the vaccine is still about 90% effective after 2 weeks. In the short term, one dose of the vaccine protects as well as two. A second dose probably gives you longer lasting protection. You shouldn't get your second dose sooner than 21-28 days after the first one, but waiting longer for your second dose won't reduce your protection.

The original gap between the first and second doses was 35 days. Where did the new 16-week gap come from? Isn't that too long?

Many countries have delayed second doses and found that people still have a strong immune response against COVID-19. Studies around the world are showing that even one dose of COVID-19 vaccine provides very good protection.

Health Canada and the Canadian National Immunization Advisory Committee support a longer delay between first and second doses. Because vaccine supplies are currently limited in BC, the time between first and second doses is being extended so that more people can get their first dose.



Why are the side effects sometimes worse for the second dose?

This is because the vaccines are very good at stimulating your immune system (which is what we want them to do). When you get your second dose,

the first dose has already primed your immune system. This means you might have a stronger reaction (e.g., headache, muscle aches, fatigue) than you did the first time. This means the vaccine is working.

For more information, visit immunizebc.ca/covid-19-vaccine-frequently-asked-questions and www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-covid-19-vaccine

See full infographic: northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/health-information/health-topics/vaccine/documents/covid-19-facts-about-vaccine.pdf



STAYING SAFE AND HEALTHY IN DIFFICULT TIMES

It's safe to get health care

Clinics and emergency rooms are still open.

Remember, your doctor or nurse practitioner is still here for you! If you have a health care concern, don't hesitate to call.

Please call ahead (don't drop in), because they may not be seeing patients in person – many offices are doing appointments over the phone or online instead.

Please note that emergency departments are still open as well.

If you have symptoms of a cold, the flu, COVID-19, or if you have other primary care concerns, call the **Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic at 1-844-645-7811.**

It's safe for your child to get health care.

Offices, clinics, and hospitals have the correct supplies and procedures in place to keep everyone safe during your visit. Your family can still get essential medical care.

Very few children and youth have become seriously ill from COVID-19. It is safe for your child to get the medical care they need, such as routine immunizations. **The risk of not seeking medical care can be much higher than the risk of your child getting sick from COVID-19.**

If you're not sure whether your child needs medical care, use the red, amber and green direction in the resource linked below to help you decide. If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, call ahead to the hospital or clinic, if you can, to tell them you're coming.

For more information, see the full message from childhealthbc.ca.



The NH Connections bus can help you access health care

Northern Health Connections is an affordable travel service program for patients needing to travel for out-of-town health care appointments.

Passengers who can currently use the bus:

- People traveling for non-urgent medical procedures, such as appointments with chiropractors or massage therapists. You will have to show proof of your appointment.
- People who have been discharged from hospital or another facility by health authority hospital staff. (Appointment verification not required.)
- Medically necessary companions
- Northern Health staff and physicians (including health care students), who are travelling for work

We will not be accepting:

- Passengers travelling without a medical appointment, including seniors (60+).

Northern Health Connections will continue to run with limited seating and enhanced safety measures until further notice. Some changes we have implemented will be permanent, including:

- Masks must be worn at all times.
- All travel must now be booked 48 hours in advance.
- We will not be accepting any walk-on passengers: no exceptions.
- Anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms will not be allowed to travel.
- To ensure physical distancing, we have installed partitions between all the seats.
- A maximum of 22 passengers will be allowed on each coach.
- A maximum of five passengers will be allowed on each minibus.



To be eligible for the NH Connections program, patients:

- Must have a valid BC Care Card
- Must not need care from a doctor or nurse during their trip
- Must need to access a health service that's not available in their home community (such as cancer treatment, hemodialysis, a specialist doctor, a primary care physician, physiotherapy, dentist, pharmacy, a higher level of care such as surgery at a hospital, etc.).

Other patients who can use the NH Connections service are those who have been transported outside of their home community by BC Emergency Health Services (ambulance or medevac) and need to get home.

For full details on the NH Connections bus service, visit nhconnections.ca.

Lab and diagnostic imaging

Northern Health is working on using our lab services in the safest and most efficient way while we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some changes to operations have occurred to follow safety guidelines. Please confirm protocol before your lab or diagnostic imaging appointment.

Check our website for the latest information: northernhealth.ca/services/hospital-services/lab-services/lab-locations

Cardiac services

British Columbia Health Authorities have been directed to start planning and implementing a gradual phased return to a “new normal” as outlined in the BC's Restart Plan (gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan). All Northern Health hospitals implemented formal safety plans guided by provincial guidelines and directives to minimize the risk and ensure safety of staff and patients is maintained, prior to the resumption of non-urgent elective cardiac services across Northern Health.

All postponed cardiac elective services including cardiac procedures, cardiac diagnostic testing, and follow up appointments are rescheduled according to priority. Further, Northern Health cardiac program has developed a regional guidance plan to support the ramp of cardiac services and reduction of the waitlist backlog across Northern Health region in accordance with the provincial directions and recent Canadian Cardiovascular Society recommendations.

Other Northern Health services

For the latest updates on other services such as elective surgeries, visit [stories.northernhealth.ca/news-and-media/news](https://northernhealth.ca/news-and-media/news), or talk to your health care provider or local health care facility.

7 tips for talking to kids about COVID-19

- 1** Don't be afraid to talk about it. Convey the facts and set an emotionally reassuring tone.
- 2** Be age-appropriate. Older kids can generally handle more detail than younger kids. Focus on answering their questions. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It's okay if you can't answer everything.
- 3** Follow their lead. Encourage them to ask questions and share their perspective. Invite them to tell you anything they may have heard about COVID-19, and to express how they feel.
- 4** Check yourself. Feeling anxious? Take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer questions.
- 5** Focus on actions you can take. Emphasize safety precautions everyone can take to help keep themselves and others healthy: good hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette, physical distancing, and staying home if you aren't feeling well.
- 6** Stick to routine. Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes are key to keeping kids happy and healthy, especially during challenging times.
- 7** Keep talking. Let them know the lines of communication are going to be open, and that as you learn more, you'll share the information with them.

Tips for mental wellness

- Take breaks from social media
- Help others if you can
- Make sure you're getting regular and good quality nutrition, sleep, and exercise
- Connect with friends and family in a way that keeps you and others safe, like phone and video calls

Mental health resources:

Please be aware that there is help available during these difficult times; don't hesitate to reach out for yourself or on behalf of a loved one.

The following resources can help:

Stress, anxiety, and depression

gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/managing-covid-stress

COVID-19 and anxiety

heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/covid-19-and-anxiety

Child and youth mental health and substance use

northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/health-information/health-topics/coronavirus/documents/covid-19-cymhsu-resources-for-families.pdf

Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre

Provides confidential, non-judgmental, free emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including thoughts of suicide.

- Call 604-872-3311 (Greater Vancouver)
- Toll-free 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
- crisiscentre.bc.ca

The KUU-US Crisis Response Service

Provides 24/7 culturally-aware crisis support to Indigenous Peoples in B.C.

- Call 1-800-588-8717
- kuu-uscrisisline.com



It's everyone's role to fight stigma against COVID-19

Now more than ever, it's important to be kind to one another. Stigma is a negative stereotype or negative association about people with an illness. Some groups of people may be experiencing stigma because of COVID-19, including people diagnosed with COVID-19 and health care workers.



"Be safe. Be calm. Be kind."

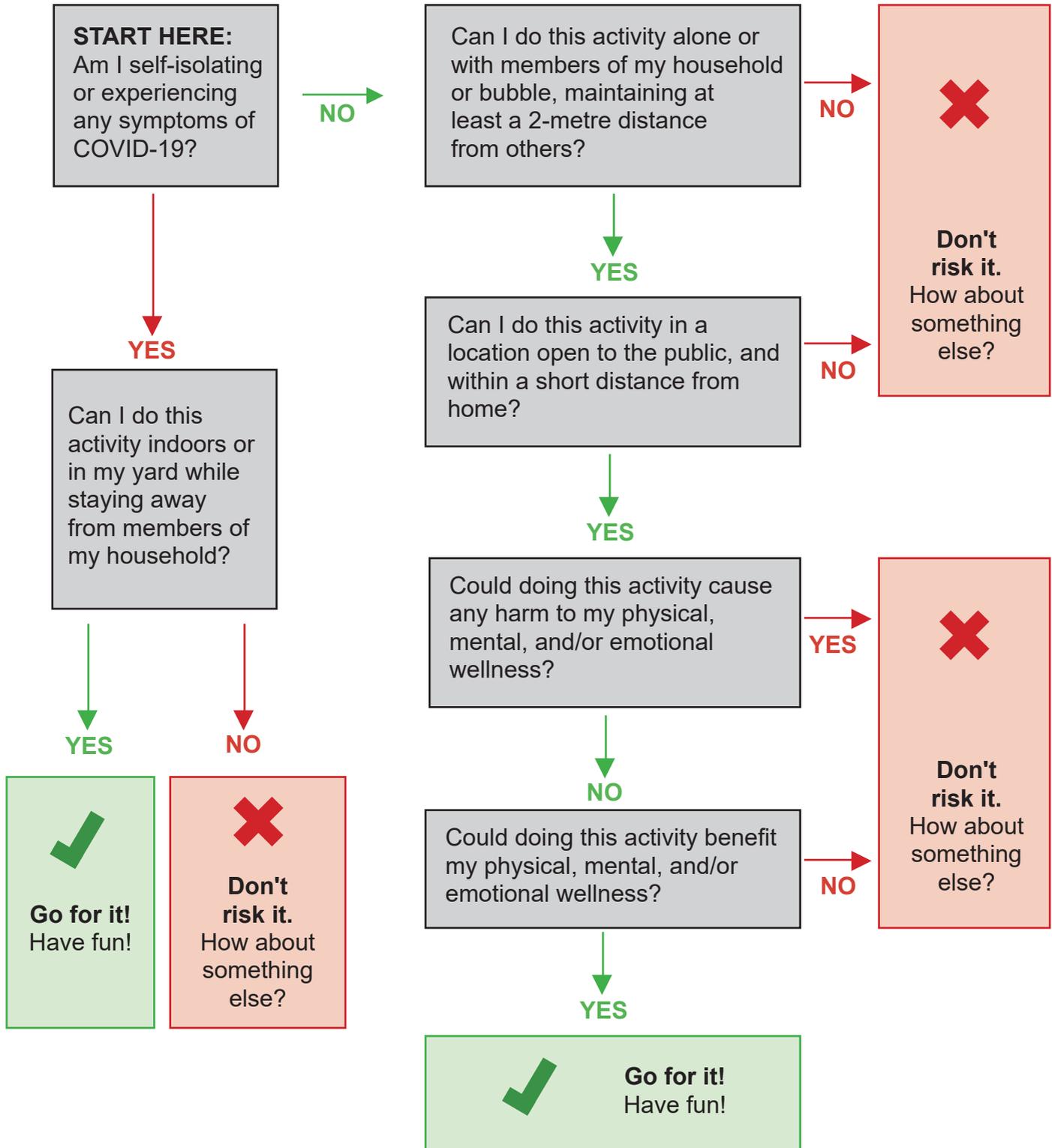
- Dr. Bonnie Henry

Stigma hurts everyone by creating fear or anger towards other people, and negatively affecting the mental health of stigmatized people and the communities they live in.

How do we stop stigma? Know the facts, share only accurate information with others, and most of all, be kind.

Choosing safe and healthy activities during the pandemic

It's important to stay active and healthy while we're staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. The activity matrix below shows which activities can be safe for you and your loved ones, and which ones you should avoid.



FAQs on donations

Northern Health is extremely grateful for the many offers we've received from individuals and organizations who want to donate protective equipment, financial support, and time to our health care workers and hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Can I donate items to Northern Health?

Yes. If you wish to donate any items, please email the details to ppe.donation@northernhealth.ca so we can better manage these requests and decide if the item(s) can be used in a health care setting. Please note donated items must be unused and unopened, and unfortunately, we are not accepting homemade items at this time. Please do not drop off items at any NH facilities without permission.

Can I make a financial donation?

Yes. Financial donations can still be made to your local health care foundation or auxiliary. Information about your local foundation or auxiliary can be found here: northernhealth.ca/about-us/get-involved/hospital-foundationsauxiliaries#hospital-foundations-and-societies

Funding opportunities for food programs

Some people's income and food security have been affected by the pandemic. Making sure everyone has access to healthy nutrition is an important part of the COVID-19 response. This document offers potential granting opportunities for community-based food programs – see Food Program Funding Opportunities: northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/health-information/health-topics/coronavirus/documents/covid-19-food-program-funding.pdf

If you know of, or represent, a community-based organization that supports food access, some of these grants may be helpful. Each grant has specific eligibility guidelines, so be sure to read the information in detail.





ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITIES

It's important that Northern Health, the FNHA, and community leaders work together to respond to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The important leadership role of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO)

- Following provincial health orders and recommendations is critical. Everyone in BC must follow PHO Orders regardless of whether there are known cases in the community or not. We should assume that anyone in the community could have COVID-19. For the latest orders and notices, see gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus#orders
- Public health orders aim to manage and reduce the spread of COVID-19 by encouraging physical distancing and other precautions. Compliance and Enforcement Officers provide assistance with these orders with the following principles in mind:
 - Focussing on public education and voluntary compliance without the need for law enforcement interventions.
 - A balanced approach to maintaining public trust to ensure essential services can operate while following public health orders.
 - Following these principles, supporting people to come forward for testing and treatment, and to enable COVID-19 case monitoring and contact tracing.

The community's role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

Messages from local leaders and champions are an important part of this role. Community leaders can encourage and inform their community members by sharing messages like these:

- Maintain social distancing (a minimum of 2 metres/6 feet). When it's difficult to maintain this distance with people not in your bubble, wear a tight-fitting mask. As

well, masks are required in most indoor public places. Please remember that all masks are not equal in providing protection. For example, shields alone provide very little protection. See hcbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/compliance_and_enforcement_guidance_march_31_2020-002.pdf

- People who can't wear a mask or who can't put on or remove a mask on their own are exempt. Some people can't wear a mask because of psychological, behavioural, or health conditions. Some people may also need to remove their masks to communicate due to a hearing impairment. Please be respectful of people who can't wear a mask.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds. Using soap and water is the single most effective way of reducing the spread of infection.
- If a sink is not available, you can use alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs) to clean your hands, as long as they aren't visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, use a wipe and then an ABHR.
- Don't touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Don't share food, drinks, utensils, etc.
- Facemasks can be used as an additional layer to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by containing a person's droplets. As mentioned above, masks are also required in most indoor public places. Please visit the BCCDC's masks page for up-to-date information: bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks.
- If you're sick:
 - Stay home and if possible, avoid close contact with others in your home.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
 - To decide if you need to be tested for COVID-19, use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool at bc.thrive.health/covid19/en, or visit the [testing page at bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing](https://bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing).

People in my community aren't following the provincial health orders – what should I do?

See these recommendations:

- It's important to not shame or blame others - stigma has played a significant role in driving the spread of COVID-19 in the North. Focussing on how people are following the orders (instead how they are not following them), and being kind and supportive is key to preventing stigma in communities.
- Use an education approach to help non-complying community members

understand the importance of everyone working together to protect each other from the spread of COVID-19.

- If community members are not following the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer, the recommended approach is to pursue focused communications to the community at large, and also to share messages directly to the groups of people not complying.
- Assess the risk to the community and work with your available resources to develop a local plan. A partnered approach between your Bylaw Enforcement Officer (if available in the community), WorkSafe BC, the police, and Northern Health (Environmental Health) is recommended.

Role of Compliance and Enforcement Officers (C & EOs)

- C & EOs are bylaw enforcement officers and other provincial compliance officers such as liquor and cannabis control and licencing inspectors, gambling enforcement and investigations officers, and community safety personnel.
- When helping with enforce public health orders, C & EOs are guided by policy direction from the Provincial Health Officer.
- C & EOs are not authorized to detain anyone as a result of a contravention or suspected contravention of a public health order.
- C & EOs are not authorised to issue a fine or penalty.

Supporting vulnerable people in the community

- Communities should work with community partners to support vulnerable people who are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. One example might be working with BC Housing to develop accommodation options for the homeless population to support their ability to self-isolate.