



COVID-19 UPDATE

STAKEHOLDERS

Friday, March 20, 2020

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, patients, staff, and visitors across the North will need to change some behaviours. As well, there will be changes in how people access local health care in their communities. **Northern Health is committed to keeping you and your communities informed on these changes.** Please watch for regular updates like this one.

Updates from the Province

- **As of March 19, 2020**, there have been **FOUR (4)** confirmed COVID-19 cases in NH.
- In the province, there are **271** identified cases.
- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – March 19, 2020.

How is Northern Health responding to the COVID-19 outbreak?

On March 18, 2020, the BC Government declared a State of Emergency. The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and the BC Ministry of Health are working with provincial and federal partners on surveillance, testing, infection control and preparation measures with health authorities.

Northern Health has been directed to move all hospitals in the province to Outbreak Response Phase 2. This means our hospitals will shift to running only urgent and emergency outpatient clinics and imaging/image-guided procedures, and will postpone all non-urgent procedures.

All Northern Health sites are involved in the ongoing planning and preparation for COVID-19. Northern Health has an emergency operation centre (EOC) in place to oversee the response to COVID-19. It includes the following 11 task groups:

- Phase Scenario and Response
- Acute Management & Ambulatory Care
- Long-Term Care Response & Capacity
- Emergency Departments & Patient Transfer
- Primary and Community Care / Urgent & Primary Care Centres
- Population and Public Health
- Infection Prevention & Control and Environmental Cleaning
- Staffing and Workplace Health & Safety
- Logistics and Supply
- Communications
- Business Continuity

Northern Health 24/7 COVID-19 call centre up and running

Northern Health has implemented an online COVID-19 clinic to help answer Northerners' questions. Staffed by nurses and primary care providers, it offers information, virtual screenings, and assessment for people who think they might have COVID-19 / might have been exposed.

It will be staffed 24/7 for now, but service levels may be reduced depending on demand.

Toll-free number: **1-844-645-7811**

Online symptom checker available

An online self-assessment tool for COVID-19 is now available on the BCCDC website:

<https://covid19.thrive.health/>

Provincial call centre available for COVID-19 questions

The provincial government has implemented a helpline for non-medical questions: BC Govt. COVID-19 Helpline: **1-888-COVID19** or **1-888-268-4319**

How can I be tested for COVID-19?

COVID-19 testing locations are operational in all communities across the region. Please note that people are being asked **NOT** to go to testing locations without an appointment. Testing is available for all who need it, but not everyone needs a test.

People who do NOT NEED to be tested*	People who NEED to be tested
People with no symptoms*	People with severe illness
People with mild symptoms*	People who require hospitalization
Returning travellers self-isolating at home*	Residents of long-term care facilities
	Health-care workers
	Anyone part of an active investigation or outbreak cluster

* Unless their condition worsens to the point that they require medical care.

There are three ways to book an appointment for a test:

- NH COVID-19 Online Clinic and Information Line: **1-844-645-7811**, toll-free.
- British Columbia COVID-19 information line: **1-888-COVID19 / 1-888-268-4319**
- HealthlinkBC (**811**)

Also see BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool: <https://covid19.thrive.health/>

The Patient Care Coordinator will call to provide:

1. Testing appointment time.
2. Instructions on how to enter the testing facility.

Will I be able to find out if there's a case in my community?

Northern Health won't identify or release the location of people in our region who may have contracted COVID-19 if we know where they contracted it, if we know where they are, and if they are isolating per protocols.

Under those conditions, they are not a threat to public health, so they are entitled to privacy. As well, we don't want to incite panic or rumours in communities. This is consistent with the approach being taken across the province.

If there are cases of community transmission, or there's an unexplained jump in confirmed cases, communities will be notified as necessary to ensure public health management.

It's important that people are prepared and take the appropriate precautions that we have been sharing regularly. The actions we're asking you to take are the same, whether there are cases in your community or not.

Is the Northern Health Connections bus still running?

We will be restricting passengers to those who require essential out of town appointments, such as dialysis patients. Additional decisions may be forthcoming on travel suspensions.

Reducing visitor access

Until further notice, the following visitor restrictions are now in place in hospital and long term care:

- **ONE** (1) adult caregiver/support person (exceptions may be made for Neonatal ICU & Inpatient Pediatric, with routine precautions and in consultation with infection prevention & control)
- We will accommodate patient and family needs and consult with infection prevention & control for Palliative/end of life areas

Trusted links

- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [HealthLink BC FAQ](#)
- [WHO FAQ](#)
- [Health Canada FAQ](#)