



# COMMUNITY UPDATE

*The latest from Northern Health*

February 23, 2022

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## COVID-19 Restriction updates

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### COVID-19 Restrictions that are changing

As of February 16, many restrictions have eased. With proof of vaccination and masks, these activities have returned 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](#).

## 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 Information and updates

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### 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 to launch today (Wednesday, February 23)

An online screening tool and virtual assessment service will launch today (Wednesday, February 23) 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. In addition, 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](#).

## 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.

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

**If you test positive for COVID-19, you may be eligible for specific 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

### To access these treatments:

1. 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.
2. If you do not have a health care provider, or you are unable to reach them, please call the [Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic](#) at 1-844-645-7811 (10 am to 10 pm daily PST including weekends and holidays).

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

## 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.

### **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.

### **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.

## 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 22, **27, 953** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- New cases: **35**
- Currently in hospital: **59**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **12**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **303**

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 22, 2022
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – February 17, 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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### Toxic drug alert for Terrace

There has been an increase in overdose events in the community of Terrace. The reported substance is dark purple/blue chalky substance, sold as down. 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. One of the first signs of an overdose is choking, gurgling, or snoring sounds.

For more information, please see the [toxic drug alert for Terrace article](#) on the Northern Health Stories site, and the [printable version of the alert](#).

This alert expires March 3, 2022.

## Organizational news

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### Hundreds of new nursing training seats coming province wide

British Columbians will soon benefit from more nurses to support their health care needs as 602 new nursing seats are being added to public post-secondary institutions throughout the province.

This investment is a key pillar of the StrongerBC's Economic Plan, which aims to close the skills gap with a generational commitment to accelerate talent development and skills training for British Columbians.

To read more, including the breakdown of the seats being added, please visit the article on the [BC Government News site](#).

### Pink Shirt Day

On the last Wednesday of February every year (**February 23** this year), people across the world wear pink to take a stand against bullying, for Pink Shirt Day. As stated on [pinkshirtday.ca](#), the mission of the day and movement is "to create a more kind, inclusive world by raising awareness and funds for anti-bullying initiatives."

To read more about Pink Shirt Day, including its history, visit the [Northern Health Stories site](#).