



COMMUNITY UPDATE

The latest from Northern Health

March 24, 2021

Note: Please share any information in this update as appropriate.

In this issue

- [Provincial case counts and statements](#)
- [Northern Health's COVID-19 vaccine plan page is the source of truth](#)
- [Front-line workers will be prioritized for COVID-19 vaccinations -- more information will be available over the coming weeks](#)
- [Stay active, stay safe: Physical activity resources and recommendations for older adults during COVID-19](#)
- [Vaccine clinics: Information for older adults](#)
- [COVID-19 Guide for communities](#)
- [Trusted links and resources for COVID-19](#)
- [Important information for those responding to overdoses: Benzodiazepines found in opioids](#)

COVID-19

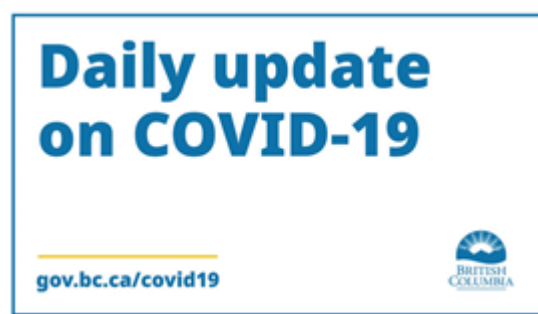
Provincial case counts and statements

As of March 23, **5,599** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **315**
- New cases: **23**
- Currently in hospital: **41**
- Currently in ICU-level care in hospital: **12**
- Deaths in the region since the beginning of the pandemic: **120**

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, see the [COVID-19 Epidemiology app](#), which visualizes COVID-19 in BC in comparison to other Canadian and global jurisdictions, at the



HSDA level. It's updated on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

- [Joint statement on Province of B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#) – March 24, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – March 24, 2021

Northern Health's COVID-19 vaccine plan page is the source of truth

The vaccine rollout can be a confusing time. For the most up-to-date information, check Northern Health's [COVID-19 vaccine plan page](#), which is updated often to reflect the latest changes. The page also includes a list of communities, with specific details for who can call in, where to get your vaccine, etc.

Pictured: Sabine Mielke, RN, gets her COVID-19 vaccine in Fort St. John



Front-line workers will be prioritized for COVID-19 vaccinations -- more information will be available over the coming weeks

Your employer will arrange your vaccine appointment. **Please do not call into the call centre; help us keep the phone lines open for age-based bookings.**

These front line workers include:

- First responders (police, firefighters, emergency transport)
- K-12 educational staff
- Childcare staff
- Grocery store workers
- Postal workers
- Bylaw and quarantine officers
- Manufacturing workers
- Wholesale/warehousing employees
- Staff living in congregate housing at places like ski hills
- Correctional facilities staff
- Cross-border transport staff



- Other workers in sectors or settings prioritized due to outbreak response

Learn more: www.gov.bc.ca/covidvaccine

Stay active, stay safe: Physical activity resources and recommendations for older adults during COVID-19

Staying active is critical for healthy aging and maintaining overall well-being. Doctors of BC have pulled together trusted resources and tips to create [this information sheet](#) designed to help older adults stay active, healthy, and safe during the pandemic.



Vaccine clinics: Information for older adults

NH follows the BC Immunization plan, so anyone in a [Phase 1 or 2 group](#) is currently eligible and can continue to be booked into clinics. NH is still booking Phase 2 eligible groups (e.g., staff who work in shelters, supportive seniors housing, and other identified congregate settings; public and private professionals/workers who provide direct patient care in hospital, community-based, or home-based settings).

These people fall primarily outside of the 70+ age group, but are eligible for immunization. With regards to frontline workers, information on how and where they will be immunized will be shared in the next few weeks. More information will be coming, but those individuals should **not** be calling in to book an appointment.

NH is taking a community approach to age eligibility, recognizing that Northern communities vary in size and demographics. We adjust age eligibility for calling in to do two things: (1) to manage the call volume at the call centre, and (2) to do our best to have the oldest people get their appointments first.

This is a challenging process, but it's an effort to make sure appointments get filled by the oldest people first. On rare occasions, appointments may fill based on the age criteria we set and the



number of appointment/clinics available. When that occurs, we add additional appointments and clinics before we expand the eligibility further.

Unfortunately, some people may have to call back, but that's the exception and we're working to avoid this as much as possible. We are asking people for their patience; our goal is still to vaccinate everyone who wants to be vaccinated by July.

In addition, as we book appointments, there are times when the call centre will also book in people outside the specified age range. For example, they might book a couple, so they don't have to call back again later for one partner.

We continue to ask people to call in on specific days based on age in order to minimize wait times on the call lines, and to ensure the older age ranges get the first appointments.

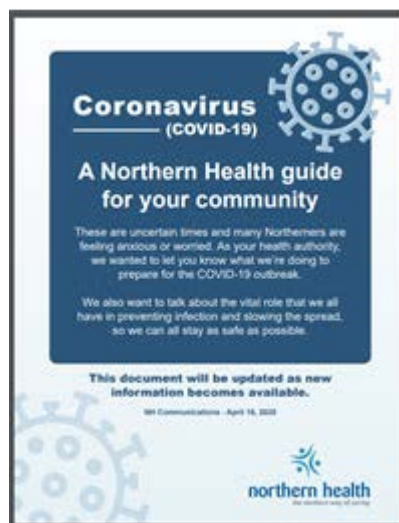
At this time, Northern Health is not doing call-outs to the general population unless they are returning a message, or contacting to re-book an appointment.

We recognize that some people may have questions about the vaccines. Even if you only get the first dose, the vaccine is still about 80% 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.

The vaccines are safe and they won't make you sick, but there still may be side effects. These 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. For more information, see <https://immunizebc.ca/ask-us/questions/what-are-common-side-effects-covid-19-vaccine-if-i-have-side-effect-do-i-need>

COVID-19 Guide for communities

Northern Health's printable booklet [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): A Northern Health Guide for Your Community](#) contains all the information you need to help keep your community safe and well informed. The community guide is updated regularly online.



Trusted links and resources for COVID-19

- [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 COVID-19 Online Clinic & Information Line: **1-844-645-7811**
- For **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 webpage on current health topics](#).

OVERDOSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Important information for those responding to overdoses: Benzodiazepines found in opioids

Reports of benzodiazepines (benzos) contaminating the illicit drug supply continue to increase across BC. Benzos, including rarer analogues such as etizolam, are becoming more common in the illicit drug (opioid) supply. Benzos found in opioids **increase the likelihood of overdose, and the complexity of overdose presentations and response**, as a result of combined opioid and benzo respiratory depression. Physicians report seeing patients in benzo withdrawal.

For more details and clinical considerations, see the [Benzos in Opioids Summary Sheet](#).



OTHER NORTHERN HEALTH NEWS



Wash your hands often with warm running water and soap for at least 20 seconds.

Avoid contact, keep a safe distance of at least 2 meters from others, and limit your movements to reduce contagion.