

LATEST UPDATE – Nov. 25, 2020

In an effort to keep our community partners connected, we are providing you with regular COVID-19 updates.

Ministry of Health Update

In today's media availability on B.C.'s COVID-19 response, Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, and Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, reported 738 cases for a total of 29,086 people diagnosed with COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. There were 169 new cases reported in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region. 13 new deaths were confirmed, while a further 294 people have been hospitalized, with 61 cases receiving treatment in ICU. No new additional healthcare outbreaks were announced.

Dr. Bonnie Henry Briefing Rapid Testing

When asked about the roll-out of rapid testing, Dr. Henry said our plan is to use them in very similar way as Ontario. They play a role in detecting cases and clusters in both remote communities, and in long-term care. They are more effective for symptomatic people, rather than asymptomatic. Unfortunately, they are not as sensitive as our traditional lab tests for COVID-19. They are also sensitive to lower temperatures and proved to be less effective during initial testing among the Downtown Eastside community, where they were administered in a mobile test unit. We are expecting more machines and test kits for rapid testing in coming months.

Mask Mandate and Order

Speaking about the mask mandate (further details below), Dr. Henry urged British Columbians to be patient and compassionate, as not everyone is able to wear a mask for a number of reasons. There are a number of individuals with underlying medical conditions, psychological, behaviour, physical, cognitive, or mental impairments, which means it may not be feasible for them to wear one. She urged retailers and business owners to avoid denying people service because they are not wearing a mask, and reemphasized the importance of looking at other ways of engaging these populations, including curbside pick-up and online deliveries, where possible.

On Tuesday October 24, the Solicitor General issued a mask mandate order. Members of the public must now wear masks in indoor public settings and all retail stores, which includes malls, shopping centres, grocery stores, coffee shops, libraries, and places of worship, among other settings. Those who do not comply with this new order will be subject to a \$230 fine. There are a number of important exemptions including those with underlying health conditions, and physical, cognitive, or mental impairments which makes it not possible to wear one; people who cannot remove a mask on their own; and children under the age of 12. For full details on the new mask mandate, visit the [government website](#).

COVID-19 Vaccinations

There was a strong focus on COVID-19 vaccines during the press conference. Dr. Bonnie Henry announced that the BC Centre for Disease Controls' logistics team is working closely with the federal government to ensure the safe delivery of the right vaccine, to the right people, in the most efficient way possible. [Dr. Ross Brown](#), Vice President for Pandemic Response with VCH, has been appointed lead of the provincial COVID-19 vaccine program. Dr. Brown will work closely with the Deputy Health Minister, and Dr. Bonnie Henry to ensure the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out is efficient and effective.

Prime Minister Trudeau yesterday also provided an update on the availability of COVID-19 vaccines to Canadians during a media briefing. He expects vaccines to arrive in the first quarter of next year. He emphasized that because Canada does not have a domestic manufacturing capacity, unlike the United States, Germany and others, we may see the vaccines arriving shortly after these countries first receive batches.

Oxford University released interim data around their vaccine candidate's efficacy, suggesting it boasts 70% protection, but this may extend to 90% across two shots. This vaccine has less sensitive storage requirements than those developed by both Pfizer and Moderna.

Open Board Forum

The VCH Board of Directors invites you to our virtual Open Board Forum at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, November 30th. This meeting is dedicated to our communities in Sea to Sky, Sunshine Coast, Powell River and the Central

Coast including Bella Coola and Bella Bella. This is the Open Board Meeting that was postponed in light of the recent provincial election. Open to the public, the virtual Open Board Forum is an opportunity to join a conversation with our Board and for us to hear from you. The Board Chair and senior leaders will provide updates on COVID-19 as - more than ever – we want to stay connected to our communities in the Coastal region. To register and to send questions in advance, please email ce@vch.ca

We hope you are able to attend, and please forward this invitation to those who might be interested. The details are attached.

VCH Website and Translation Engagement

VCH is starting two important projects – the redesign of the VCH website and a review of VCH translation practices. Your input in the web design project and the translation needs at VCH for safe care will help us improve our translation tools and ensure our future website is a user-friendly resource that is easy to navigate. We are hosting Zoom focus groups to hear from the diverse communities we serve. To register for any of the focus group times and dates (see the attached poster), please email ce@vch.ca.

Testing

Anyone in the VCH region with cold, influenza or COVID-19-like symptoms, however mild, can now be assessed for and get a COVID-19 test. Contact your physician or nurse practitioner's office, or a local community collection centre to arrange for a test. Phone numbers and locations of collection centres can be found by visiting: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing> or by calling 8-1-1. For more information and latest updates on COVID-19, follow the BC Centre for Disease Control on Twitter @CDCofBC or visit the website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>.

Other Resources

To find the Provincial Health Officer's orders, visit:

<https://www2.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>

To see a map of COVID-19 cases by local health area, visit:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data>

For a listing of the community exposure events, go to: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/public-exposures>

For the latest medical updates, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing, visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>

For community engagement opportunities at VCH, see: <http://cean.vch.ca/members/current-opportunities/>