

LATEST UPDATE – Nov. 17, 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 joint statement on B.C.'s COVID-19 response, Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, and Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, reported 717 new cases of COVID-19 for a total of 23,661 cases in the province since the pandemic began. There were 177 new cases in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region. Currently, 198 individuals are hospitalized with COVID-19 provincially, 63 of whom are in intensive care. The remaining people are recovering at home in self-isolation. There were 11 new deaths, bringing our total number to 310. VCH assisted living, long-term care homes and seniors' rental buildings with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks are:

- Arbutus Care Centre (first floor)
- Amica Edgemont Village (Memory Care Unit)
- Columbus Residence (second floor)
- Holy Family Hospital (rehab not impacted)
- Capilano Care Centre
- Fraserview Intermediate Care Lodge
- Louis Brier Home & Hospital
- Banfield Pavilion (fourth floor)
- Royal Arch Masonic Home
- Three Links Care Centre.

Dr. Bonnie Henry Briefing

After a record-breaking number of cases over the last three day period, Dr. Henry issued the following statement:

"It is the small yet essential efforts, like staying home when ill, not having social gatherings, minimizing our travel, maintaining a safe distance from others and using masks, that have a big impact. Today, we have seen that much of the transmission is occurring in private homes at social gatherings, at workplaces where people are gathering, or in risky indoor settings, like group fitness activities. These are all locations where there are limited layers of protection and people are not wearing masks.

"Masks are especially important in businesses and public spaces, on transit and ferries, when we are around people we don't know and are unable to keep a safe distance. This also includes indoor public places like shopping malls, stores and community centres. It is important to remember that businesses are required to ensure the health and safety of their employees and right now, that means a requirement to have COVID-19 safety plan in place to operate.

"This is a critical time for all of us. Getting through this surge in new cases and throughout this pandemic requires all of us to do our part and support each other to do the same. It is how we reduce our risks and protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities."

Schools

When asked if schools might close early for the winter break, Dr. Henry said it's something she is considering. However, COVID-19 exposures in schools are a reflection of what's happening in communities. With this in mind, she is looking into what can be done to reduce transmissions in the community (such as the new order) and subsequently, in schools as well. Closing schools earlier for the winter break is being considered, but this action creates other challenges such as youth congregating anyhow in less safe places, and leaving essential workers without a safe place for their children. No decisions have been made on this yet, and many different options are being considered.

Dr. Henry added that returning to a full lockdown similar to March and April is unlikely, because we know that there are many things that can operate safely, such as schools, restaurants, and businesses where COVID-19 protocols are followed. We do, however, need to return to the more restrictive mentality we had in the spring when it comes to social gatherings in private homes and in the workplace, as this is where the majority of transmission is occurring across the province.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

There's been lots of good news in the past week when it comes to a vaccine for COVID-19, especially from the companies Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc. Dr. Henry has mentioned she's hopeful a vaccine will be available for vulnerable populations in B.C. by early 2021, and for the rest of the population later in the year. Guidelines are being developed federally and provincially about who would qualify as vulnerable populations.

Neither Pfizer nor Moderna have completed their clinical trials, and their full data set has not yet been made public. However early results from a subset of the data looks promising: Moderna data suggests the vaccination is 94.5% effective, while the Pfizer data indicates their vaccine is more than 90% effective.

Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley Restrictions

The Provincial Health Officer has issued an order for all individuals, places of work, and businesses for communities in the Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health regions. The communities of the Central Coast Regional District and Bella Coola Valley are exempt from these orders. The order is in effect from Nov. 7, 2020 at 10:00 pm to Nov. 23, 2020 at 12 pm.

Have questions about what the order means for you and your family? Our FAQs for businesses, gyms, fitness studios, and recreational centres, as well as general questions, are now available in Hindi, Punjabi and simplified Chinese. To view the FAQ, visit: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/lower-mainland-and-fraser-valley-restrictions-nov-7-23-2020>

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/>