

LATEST UPDATE – Jan. 15, 2021

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

Ministry of Health Update

In yesterday's joint statement on B.C.'s COVID-19 response, Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, and Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, reported a total of 536 new COVID-19 cases for the province. The total number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in B.C. now stands at 59,608 since the start of the pandemic. There were 102 new cases reported in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region. There are 4,624 active cases of COVID-19 across B.C. currently.

Across the province, seven new deaths were confirmed, while 362 people are currently hospitalized, with 74 of these cases receiving treatment in ICU/critical care. The total number of individuals who have passed away due to COVID-19 is 1,038.

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

Since the start of immunizations, 69,746 doses of vaccine have been delivered. This includes eligible front-line health care workers, medical staff and long-term care and assisted-living residents in Vancouver and Richmond and, as of yesterday, in Sea to Sky, the Sunshine Coast and Powell River.

Between now and the end of March, the people most at risk and those who are supporting our health care system are the priority. As the vaccination supply increases and the immunization program expands to more and more people across the province, the vaccination process will get increasingly complex. Work is underway to determine how much vaccine we expect to receive and when it should arrive. And Dr. Henry said significant work is being done to ensure a smooth and fair roll-out of the vaccination and more details on this will be provided next week.

To support this work, VCH Board Chair Dr. Penny Ballem was asked to join the B.C. immunization response team as the executive lead. Dr. Ballem brings a depth of experience in health care, as well as in municipal government. She has been tasked to work alongside the Minister of Health, the Provincial Health Officer and Dr. Ross Brown to ensure we are ready for widespread community immunization when the vaccine supply increases and is more readily available, starting in April.

More COVID-19 immunization information is available here: www.bccdc.ca



The photos show vaccines in Powell River, Sechelt and Squamish.

COVID-19 Variants

A number of COVID-19 variants have arisen around the world that have caused increased concern. BC has been screening for these variants as well as screening people who have recently travelled. There are now four confirmed cases of the UK variant in BC, three of whom are linked to one specific traveler and one related to an additional traveler. There are no other contacts and it is believed that this has not spread from these four cases.

The first case of the South African variant of the COVID-19 virus has been identified in BC, and this is in a person who is not known to have travelled or to have a connection with a traveler. Contact tracing is still investigating

where this person might have contracted this virus and that work will continue. At the moment, it does not appear to have spread in the community beyond the person that has been identified.

Both of these new cases, the UK variant and the South African variant, were identified in people who live in the Vancouver Coastal Health region.

The province continues to monitor and do genome sequencing in terms of surveillance for these variants. It's also why it is so important for all of us to continue to take measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. That means not gathering, it means keeping your contacts small, making sure you're using your protections, following and closely monitoring your personal health, and to get tested if you have any symptoms.

Interprovincial Travel

Earlier this week, Premier John Horgan said he is seeking legal advice to see if BC can stop Canadians from travelling to the province for non-essential reasons, as a measure to contain the spread of COVID-19. He said he also had conversations with other premiers about reducing non-essential travel and that it is time to find out whether provincial governments can act on it.

Minister Dix said British Columbians also have an obligation not to engage in non-essential travel to other provinces.

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/>