

LATEST UPDATE – Feb.2, 2021

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 429 new cases. The total number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in B.C. now stands at 68,366 since the start of the pandemic. Of the new cases, 112 people were in the Vancouver Coastal Health region.

Across the province, there have been eight new COVID-19 related deaths, while 294 people are currently hospitalized, with 82 of these cases receiving treatment in ICU/critical care. The total number of individuals who have passed away due to COVID-19 is 1,218. There are now 4,542 active cases of COVID-19 across B.C. currently.

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

Since the start of immunizations, 140,452 vaccinations have been delivered in B.C. (not including today), with 5,097 of those being a second dose. More information and immunization data is available through this page:

[BCCDC](#)

Dr. Henry said the province is expecting small amounts of Pfizer vaccines this week and a shipment of the Moderna vaccine later this week. She expects vaccine shipments to increase as the month progresses. In the meantime, she said there is a lot of work being done in preparation for the next phases of the immunization roll-out.

COVID-19 Variants

Dr. Henry provided an update on COVID-19 variants in B.C. She said there are 18 identified cases in B.C. There are four cases of the South African variant – three of the cases are not linked to the others and one was a contact. There are also now 14 cases of the UK variant, with seven new cases confirmed during the weekend. One of the contacts of a confirmed case attended a Maple Ridge school. The entire cohort of about 80 people that had contact with this individual are being tested.

Dr. Henry said the province is taking three approaches to identifying COVID-19 variants using genome sequencing. The province is randomly sampling daily COVID-19 tests across B.C. There is testing for variants any time there is a rise in cases in a specific area or setting. And travelers from International locations who test positive for COVID-19 are also tested for variants.

She said more than 11,000 genome sequencing tests for variants have been done in B.C. so far and the province is ramping up to do more. Currently, about 500 genome sequencing tests can be done each day and she wants to increase the surveillance to 700 - 1,000 cases per day. She notes that genome sequencing is slower and takes a few days.

COVID-19 Testing – Plan Ahead

Since Nov. 16, all residents in the Vancouver Coastal Health region have been offered two options for COVID-19 test collection: either saline gargle or nasopharyngeal swab when they visit certain COVID-19 test collection sites. However, test collectors are reporting some recipients arrive unprepared for the saline gargle test collection, excluding this as a viable testing option.

Anyone wishing to use the COVID-19 saline gargle device needs to avoid eating, drinking, vaping or smoking, brushing their teeth or chewing gum for at least one hour prior to taking this test. Research has shown this is necessary to ensure the test provides an accurate and reliable result.

To properly complete the gargle test collection, recipients must swish and gargle saline water in their mouth for 30 seconds under the supervision of a test administrator. Saline gargle collection is currently available at 14 test collection sites across urban and rural VCH communities, and accounts for just over 30 per cent of all COVID-19 tests performed in the region. More information on this and a list of test collection sites within VCH can be found [here](#).

Super Bowl

Dr. Henry and Minister Dix called on British Columbians to enjoy this weekend's Super Bowl football final safely. They asked that everyone holds off on Super Bowl events. No celebrations in bars, restaurants or parties at home. They ask that you enjoy the game only with those in your household. Dr. Henry said many COVID-19 transmissions occur in small groups indoors.

Overdose Crises – Funding for SAFER Pilot Project

The federal government along with B.C.'s Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Sheila Malcolmson, announced more than \$15 million in federal funding for four safer supply projects for people at risk of overdose in B.C. These projects will provide pharmaceutical-grade medication as an alternative to the toxic illegal supply in circulation.

The four safer supply projects, based in Vancouver and Victoria, will provide people with opioid use disorder with a safer, medical alternative from a licensed prescriber. The initiatives will also connect them with important health and social services, including treatment, which may be more difficult to access during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Substance use disorder is a health condition that can be managed and treated if people are provided with services and supports that best meet their needs. However, during the COVID-19 outbreak, people who use drugs are experiencing a number of increased risks, with several jurisdictions reporting higher rates of overdose, including fatal overdoses, and other harms related to an increasingly toxic illegal supply.

VCH Website and Translation Engagement

Many thanks to everyone who has been involved in our two important projects – the redesign of the VCH website and review of VCH translation practices. Your input in the web design project and 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 have launched a survey for the two projects, and would like to receive input from the diverse communities we serve. Please, feel free to distribute widely. The survey is also available in Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Punjabi and Farsi. To complete the survey, go to:

<https://survey.givingopinions.ca/vch>

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/>