

LATEST UPDATE – Dec. 23, 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 a total of 518 new COVID-19 cases over the past 24 hours. The total number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in B.C. now stands at 48,027 since the start of the pandemic. There were 97 new cases reported in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region in the last day. There are 9,689 active cases of COVID-19 across B.C. currently.

Across the province, 19 new deaths were confirmed, while 348 people are currently hospitalized, with 80 of these cases receiving treatment in ICU/critical care. The total number of deaths due to COVID-19 now stands at 796. Two healthcare facility outbreaks were announced today: at Evergreen Baptist Care Society and Minoru Residence. There are no new community outbreaks.

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

To date, 5,603 people received the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in B.C. Today, the federal government approved the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, and starting next week, the Moderna vaccine will be arriving in B.C. Some of the initial doses will be delivered to rural and remote First Nations communities. Unlike the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, this vaccine has fewer delivery restrictions, making it easier to provide immunizations in rural and remote communities.

It is estimated B.C. will receive 792,000 doses between December and March. The initial doses will be provided to priority populations, residents and staff of long term care, residents of assisted living residences, individuals in hospital and community assessed and waiting long term care placement, essential visitors in long term care and assisted living, health care workers providing hospital front line care in ICUs, medical surgical units, EDS, paramedics, and remote and isolated First Nations Communities.

Modelling Data

Dr. Bonnie Henry presented modelling data as part of the COVID-19 briefing. The modelling data shows that community transmission affects people of all ages. It is, however, the seniors and elders who continue to be the ones that are most likely to become seriously ill or worse. The data also shows that while the Provincial Health Officer's (PHO) orders and restrictions are difficult for all of us, they work.

The data graphs on daily case rate show that the numbers of people testing positive has decreased in the Fraser Health and VCH area in recent weeks; the numbers are levelling off in the hospitalizations, but they are at the highest level this year, and tragically the death rate has increased over the past few weeks.

The modelling shows that we have bent our curve slightly, and we can continue to bend our curve down, in particular when we know we have the vaccine.

School Update

Exposure is when someone with COVID-19 was in school during the time when they might be infectious to others. Even though there have been exposure events, there have been very few transmissions in schools. In school-aged population, less than 1% test positive for COVID-19. Most exposures have been in the Fraser Health and VCH region.

About 600 school-aged children or school staff have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in VCH, but only less than 200 of those resulted in school exposures. School-based transmissions are resulting from less than 20 exposures. Of cases in schools, 76% are students and 24% are staff. Having children and educators in schools is important for the long-term growth of the children.

New Provincial Health Order

Today, a new PHO order for industrial camps in the Northern Health region has been put in place. This order will allow for a phased approach to resuming activities at these projects, while protecting health and safety of individuals as well as protecting the health-care system. Dr. Henry stated that the nature of an industrial work camp means employees frequently travel to and from these work camps. At the start of the year, these camps

typically have an influx of employees returning to the site. Combined, these factors mean a higher potential for spread amongst employees and in their home communities. This order will help ease the pressure at the start of the year.

Reminder on Celebrations

Dr Henry encouraged everyone to keep celebrations small, stay local, and connect with people in safe ways. This is the special time of year, and having connections that we love is important; but we are in a critical place right now. Dr. Henry's message was to finish this year and start 2021 in the best possible place we can be.

Share the Light

It has been ten months since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. We're deep in the second wave; COVID-19 case numbers and restrictions are rising and COVID fatigue is setting in. And yet there are glimmers of light all around us – like news of the COVID-19 vaccine and the acts of kindness and support we see amongst our neighbours and health care workers. We have all experienced the uplifting effect of the 7 p.m. cheer at the start of the pandemic. Now, more than ever, a little extra cheer would go a long way.

We would like to invite you to share *your* light. At 7 p.m. tonight and every night this winter, head to your window, point your flashlight, cell phone light, etc. (but not a laser) up into the night sky and wave it around. Create a light show for your family and your neighbours. Let's fill the night sky with beams and flickers of light, reminding us all that we are all in this pandemic together and that brighter days are ahead of us.

Learn more at [VCH News](#) or on social media: [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#). #ShareTheLightBC

VCH Website and Translation Engagement

VCH has started 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 our upcoming focus group times and dates, 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/>