

LATEST UPDATE – Mar. 1, 2021

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

Vaccination update

Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, today stated that the three key goals throughout the pandemic have been to do all we can to prevent people from getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19; to keep our health system fully functioning; and, to minimize the disruption to our society. These goals have guided decision-making in response to the pandemic and they have guided the BC Immunization Plan.

Since the Province began Phase 1 of B.C.'s COVID-19 Immunization Plan, 275,000 long-term care residents and staff, people in rural and remote Indigenous communities, as well as health-care workers that focus on COVID-19 patients have been vaccinated. Over the past several weeks the Province has also closely monitored the effectiveness of the vaccines – particularly the effectiveness on older populations. Data presented from the BC Centre for Disease Control shows that the protection after a single dose is approximately 90 per cent, including in long-term care homes. Data from around the world also demonstrates there is an immune response benefit to extending the time between the two doses.

Dr. Henry concluded that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and provide a very high level of real-world protection with the initial dose. With the new evidence, Dr. Henry, is extending the interval between the first and second dose of COVID-19 vaccines to four months. Extending the period between doses will also allow more people to get their first dose sooner, increasing protection. By late-July, it could mean that everyone who wants a vaccine will have their first dose.

Two new vaccines approved

On Friday, the Government of Canada announced the approval of two versions of a new COVID-19 vaccine – the viral vector vaccine produced by Oxford-AstraZeneca and the Verity-Serum Institute of India vaccine.

Unlike the vaccines that have been available to date, this new, two-dose viral vector vaccine has the benefit of being 'fridge stable,' making it much easier to transport and distribute in B.C. The new vaccines will be integrated into the provincial immunization program as delivery and supply is confirmed in the coming weeks. The Province expects to receive the first shipment – about 60,000 doses – around March 9th. The additional supply will allow us to look at accelerating immunization of priority populations and essential workers.

This is another exciting and encouraging step forward for all of us. It means we have one more layer of protection available to us and are one step closer to getting through this pandemic.

Vaccination clinics open to eligible seniors and Indigenous people on March 15

More than 400,000 people in B.C. will be immunized from March to early April as the Province moves into Phase 2 of the largest immunization rollout in B.C.'s history.

B.C.'s strategy is based on scientific evidence, expert advice, and guidelines from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. It was developed by B.C.'s Immunization Committee and public health leadership committee led by B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry. The immunization plan depends on consistent delivery of Health Canada-approved vaccine supply by the federal government. The plan considers people's different needs and different ways of accessing information and will ensure nobody eligible to receive the vaccine is left behind. Over the coming months, vaccination timelines for different groups may change based on how much vaccine is available.

As B.C. shifts into Phase 2 of B.C.'s immunization plan, the focus will be immunizing seniors 80 years and older and Indigenous peoples 65 years and older, along with healthcare workers who have not yet been vaccinated, and people living in settings that make them vulnerable to outbreaks. With so many seniors in need of vaccine, Phase 2 takes a staggered approach:

- Reaching out directly to seniors and high-risk people residing in independent living and senior's supportive housing (including staff), and home care support clients and staff – to help us move as quickly as possible.
- Other seniors will need to call to book appointments, with older British Columbians becoming eligible first to allow us to continue to prioritize the people in our communities who are the most at risk.

Within Phase 2, different groups will be eligible to receive the vaccine at different times, with the oldest British Columbians becoming eligible first. This will allow us to continue to prioritize the people in our communities who are the most at risk.

Once you are eligible to receive a vaccine you are always eligible, you will not miss your chance to be vaccinated.

You can learn more about when different groups will be eligible to get the vaccine on the BC Government website here: gov.bc.ca/covidvaccine

Information for Seniors 80+ and Indigenous Peoples 65+ is available here: gov.bc.ca/bcseniorsfirst

VCH's implementation of Phase 2 of B.C.'s Immunization Plan

On March 1, 2021, first dose immunizations begin for those living and working in independent living centres and senior's supportive housing, as well as long-term home support clients and staff. VCH will directly contact those in this priority group to book appointments – there is no need to call.

Beginning March 8, 2021, seniors aged 80+ and Indigenous peoples aged 65+ who are not living in independent living or senior's supportive housing can make one call to book their appointment through a toll-free call centre according to a staggered schedule to avoid long waits and system overload. There is no need to register before booking. Immunization clinic locations will be confirmed at time of booking, with vaccinations.

COVID-19 vaccination clinics will open to eligible seniors on Monday, March 15, 2021. People 80 years of age and older, and Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) people 65 years of age and older, will be eligible to be vaccinated as part of Phase 2 of the B.C. COVID-19 Immunization Plan.

VCH will have vaccination clinic sites across Vancouver, Richmond and Urban and Rural Coastal communities. Most vaccination clinics will be open seven days a week, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. with evening appointments also available. Dedicated sites have also been established for Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) people, which will offer services that are culturally safe, with ceremonial plans in place.

An appointment booking toll-free phone line will begin operating on **Monday, March 8** from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week. People 80 years of age and older, and Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) people 65 years of age and older, can book their appointment by age group by calling **1-877-587-5767**.

To facilitate access to as many eligible seniors and Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) people as possible, VCH invites people in the following age groups to call the appointment booking phone line from the dates indicated below:

Richmond, Vancouver, North Vancouver and West Vancouver

Call Starting March 8: (Vaccinations starting March 15)

Year of birth in or before 1931 (seniors 90 years of age and older); year of birth in or before 1956 for Indigenous people (65 years of age and older)

Call Starting March 15: (Vaccinations starting March 22)

Year of birth in or before 1936 (seniors 85 years of age and older); year of birth in or before 1956 for Indigenous people (65 years of age and older)

Call Starting March 22: (Vaccinations starting March 29)

Year of birth in or before 1941 (seniors 80 years of age and older); year of birth in or before 1956 for Indigenous people (65 years of age and older)

Sunshine Coast, Powell River, Whistler, Squamish and Pemberton

Call Starting March 8: (Vaccinations starting March 15)

Year of birth in or before 1941 (seniors 80 years of age and older); year of birth in or before 1956 for Indigenous people (65 years of age and older)

Before calling the phone line, residents are asked to have a pen and paper, their personal health number, full name, date of birth, postal code and a phone number available.

For reference, below is important contact information related to COVID-19 vaccine.

- If you are eligible to book a vaccine appointment at VCH: call 1-877-587-5767. This toll free line is only for booking vaccine appointments.
- If you have a clinical question: first speak with your family doctor or nurse practitioner, or call 811 for nursing advice prior to booking your appointment.
- For questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, call 1-888-COVID19 (1.888.268.4319) or visit gov.bc.ca/covid19.
- For information on VCH vaccination clinics: vch.ca.

VCH is appealing to family members, friends, neighbours and social services agencies to help reach eligible seniors and Indigenous people in the community. Please share the COVID-19 vaccination information with people 80 years of age and older, or Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) people 65 years of age and older, to help them plan ahead for when the appointment booking phone line opens, according to age group.

We encourage you to share the resources online (links below) or to print and distribute as needed to eligible seniors, their families and supports in your community and networks.

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The resource toolkit includes:

- **Information Bulletin:**

[\[English\]](#) | [\[Arabic\]](#) | [\[Chinese – Traditional\]](#) | [\[Chinese - Simplified\]](#) | [\[French\]](#) | [\[Korean\]](#) | [\[Vietnamese\]](#)

- **Information for Community Partners:**

[\[English\]](#) | [\[Arabic\]](#) | [\[Chinese – Traditional\]](#) | [\[Chinese - Simplified\]](#) | [\[French\]](#) | [\[Korean\]](#) | [\[Farsi\]](#) | [\[Tagalog\]](#) | [\[Vietnamese\]](#) | [\[Punjabi\]](#)

- **Information Poster:**

[\[English\]](#) | [\[Arabic\]](#) | [\[Chinese – Traditional\]](#) | [\[Chinese - Simplified\]](#) | [\[French\]](#) | [\[Korean\]](#) | [\[Farsi\]](#) | [\[Tagalog\]](#) | [\[Vietnamese\]](#) | [\[Punjabi\]](#) | [\[Spanish\]](#)

- **Questions + Answers on Phase 2:**

[\[English\]](#) [\[More languages coming\]](#)

Thank you for your support and dedication to keeping seniors in our communities healthy and well as we move into this next phase of immunizations.

More information on Phase 2 of the immunization rollout and commonly-asked questions can be found [here](#). And the Province's Immunization Plan: Phase 2 presentation is available [here](#).

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

Vancouver Coastal Health will be making a number of resources available to help share information with eligible seniors and Indigenous people in different languages. You will be able to find them [here](#).

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/>