LATEST UPDATE – Mar. 26, 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 800 new cases. Of the new cases, 264 people were in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region.

The total number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in B.C. now stands at 94,769 since the start of the pandemic.

Across the province, there were five new COVID-19 related deaths, while 303 people are currently hospitalized, with 80 of these cases receiving treatment in ICU/critical care. The total number of individuals who have passed away due to COVID-19 is 1,446. There are 5,856 active cases of COVID-19 across B.C. currently.

B.C. has seen a notable spike in the number of new cases, especially amongst those 19 to 39 years of age. Dr. Henry said this tells us some people are taking on more risk for themselves and their loved ones than what is safe right now. Health Minister Adrian Dix said the level of transmission in B.C. is way too high and we have to collectively do something about that.

There have been 191 new confirmed COVID-19 cases that are variants of concern in our province, for a total of 1,772 cases. Of the total cases, 215 are active and the remaining people have recovered. This includes 1,549 cases of the B.1.1.7 (U.K.) variant, 47 cases of the B.1.351 (South Africa) variant and 176 cases of the P.1 (Brazil) variant.

Through the ongoing dialogue with a wide range of faith leaders, the Province has also developed a limited variance to the gathering and events order allow for indoor services on four days between Sunday, March 28 and Thursday, May 13, 2021.

Each faith can identify the days most appropriate for their faith – whether for Easter, Passover, Ramadan or Vaisakhi. The maximum capacity is 50 people, or 10% of the worship space capacity – whatever is less. There are a number of safety requirements and protocols that must be met by worship service organizers and attendees alike.

Changes to long-term care visitation on the way

People in long-term care and their loved ones will have more ways to safely spend time together, with long-term care visitation rules set to ease.

Beginning April 1, all residents in long-term care and assisted living will be able to have frequent, routine opportunities for social visitation. Eased restrictions include:
removing the requirement for a single designated social visitor to allow for additional family and friends to visit long-term care and assisted living residents;

· expanding the number of visitors so up to two visitors, plus a child, will be allowed to visit at a time, allowing people to connect in small groups;

· changing the allowable location of visits so family and friends can visit in residents’ rooms without staff present; and

· allowing physical touch between visitors and residents, provided appropriate infection prevention and control measures, like masks and hand hygiene, are in place.

Social visitation will continue to be suspended during outbreaks and will continue to require advanced booking, visitor health screening, use of medical masks and frequent hand hygiene.

Early in the pandemic, public health officials identified people living in long-term care and assisted living as particularly vulnerable to severe outcomes from COVID-19. In response, the Province took unprecedented action to protect seniors and deliver better care to keep people safe and healthy.

Dr. Bonnie Henry said that the most vulnerable among us have received a vaccine, and so we are safely amending restrictions to give people in long-term care greater opportunities to connect with the people they love.

People living and working in long-term care and assisted living were among the first to receive COVID-19 vaccinations as a part of B.C.’s strategy to use vaccines to protect those most vulnerable to severe illness first and reduce transmission in high-risk settings. Please click here for more information.

Vaccination update
Since the start of immunizations, 610,671 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca-SII COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in B.C., 87,212 of which are second doses.

Health Minister Adrian Dix says 12.7% of B.C.’s population have received a first dose of the vaccine, which is ahead of schedule. However, he notes this is not close to community immunity.

Updated information on who should get a COVID-19 vaccine can be found here and there is more information about vaccine after care here. More information and immunization data is available through this page: BCCDC.

Updates to VCH’s implementation of Phase 2 of B.C.’s immunization plan
The age-based vaccine rollout using the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines is accelerating and moving forward ahead of schedule. The following ages are invited to call 1.877.587.5767 to book their COVID-19 vaccination appointment beginning at noon on their respective dates:
People in Richmond, Vancouver, North Vancouver and West Vancouver

- Friday, March 26: seniors **74 years** of age and older
- Monday, March 29: 74 years and clinically extremely vulnerable (must have letter – see above)

People on the Sunshine Coast, Powell River, Sea to Sky and Bowen Island

- Seniors **70 years** of age and older

Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit)

- Indigenous peoples **55 years** of age and older

The call-in schedule for the age 70 to 74 cohort will be announced in the coming days.

To prepare for your call, please have available a pen and paper, personal health number, full name, date of birth, postal code and phone number. There are enough appointments available for all seniors and there is no rush to call in. Call volumes are lower in the late afternoon and evening. The appointment booking toll-free phone line is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week. Please tell the agent the name of the community you live in when calling for your vaccine appointment.

VCH is appealing to family members, friends, neighbours and social services agencies to help reach eligible seniors in the community. Please share this COVID-19 vaccination update with eligible seniors and Indigenous peoples along with Elders, to help them plan and book their appointment.

In partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S., VCH is pleased to be hosting information sessions about the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. On Saturday, March 27, learn more about the vaccine rollout during the Mandarin information session. Please click here for more information. You can also learn more about the vaccine rollout in Cantonese. Click here to watch the March 20 information session on YouTube.

The resource toolkit includes:

- **After-care information:**
  - English
  - Arabic
  - ASL
  - Chinese Simplified
  - Chinese Traditional
  - Farsi
  - French
  - Korean
  - Punjabi
  - Spanish
  - Tagalog
  - Vietnamese
**Vaccinations for the clinically extremely vulnerable**

Letters are going out to 200,000 people in B.C. aged 16 years and older who are identified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) with information on how to book a vaccination appointment, beginning March 29, 2021. People who receive this invitation letter must bring it with them to their vaccination appointment.

Expert physicians and providers in cancer care, kidney diseases and other conditions causing compromised immunity worked with public health and international COVID-19 data to define B.C.’s updated CEV list to ensure those most at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are prioritized first (click here for more information).

If people who believe they are in the CEV group have not received a letter by April 15, 2021, they can contact the provincial call centre or visit the get vaccinated provincial online registration and booking system, which is scheduled to launch on April 6, to confirm if they are on the CEV list. If they are not on the CEV list, they can reach out to their physician or nurse practitioner about their eligibility.

The CEV-based booking process will run parallel to the ongoing age-based booking schedule.

**VCH vaccination clinic locations**

A reminder that when you book your vaccination appointment, you will be directed to one of the following vaccination clinics. More information on the vaccine rollout and clinics can be found here. And if you would like to share these maps, they can be found 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](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/](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](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](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](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/](http://www.bccdc.ca/)

For **community engagement opportunities** at VCH, see: *NEW website* [engage.vch.ca](http://engage.vch.ca)