

# oneVCH COVID-19 Bulletin

February 3, 2022



## COVID-19

### Members of Squamish Nation honour health-care workers through song and prayer

On Jan. 30, more than 50 people from the Squamish Nation gathered outside Lions Gate Hospital to show their support, using songs of honour and prayer, for health-care workers.

The group included singers, dancers and drummers and was brought to the site by Darren Yelton, a Squamish Nation carver, whose mother has been a patient at LGH for the past two and a half weeks.

Yelton said that during his visits to the hospital, he noticed health-care workers going above and beyond to provide his family and other patients with the best care possible, despite it being a challenging time in health care and he wanted to express his gratitude in this special way.

## COVID-19 TESTING

### Province updates COVID-19 testing guidelines as of Feb. 1

On Feb. 1, a further revision to COVID-19 testing guidelines was published on the [BCCDC website](#), with adjustments to the populations eligible for testing at health authority operated testing sites. Many of the changes were made to ensure those who are eligible for COVID-19 therapeutics are also those eligible for testing. While Omicron causes mild illness in the majority of people, some populations continue to be at higher risk of serious illness and may benefit from therapy. Populations with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 which are currently recommended for COVID-19 testing include:

- Individuals who are moderately to severely immunocompromised
- Individuals who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated or whose vaccines are not up to date (have not received their booster) including those:
  - 60 years of age and above
  - 18 to 60 years of age **and** who have certain chronic conditions
- Individuals who live or work in settings with others who are at high-risk for severe illness
  - Health-care workers in hospitals, long-term care facilities, assisted living facilities or community clinics
  - First responders (police, emergency medical technicians/paramedics, firefighters)
  - Staff and residents in congregate settings, such as long-term care facilities, shelters, correctional facilities and group homes
  - Communities that are far from testing sites and hospitals, such as rural and remote communities, or work camps
- Pregnant people
- All Indigenous people living in both rural and urban settings

Clinicians are reminded not to refer patients for testing at any health authority run site if they are not included in one of the above categories. Those who are not eligible for testing will not be offered a test at any VCH testing site.

Currently, results from COVID-19 testing are used by VCH to determine patient eligibility for available COVID-19 therapeutics. For clinicians, we advise referring eligible patients with symptoms to access testing. If they complete a rapid antigen test and test positive, they are advised to submit their result through the [provincial survey](#). These data are used to follow-up with those who meet current treatment criteria for COVID-19 medications.

We would like to express our appreciation for the understanding and cooperation of both medical staff and staff with regards to recent changes to provincial testing and prescribing guidance for COVID-19. As we learn more about Omicron, and the lower severity of disease typically associated with this variant, public health continues to adjust its approach to ensure it is measured and based on the latest available evidence.

## COVID-19 LTC

### Updated outbreak management protocol for long-term care & assisted living

The Ministry of Health, in consultation with the B.C. Centre for Disease Control's public health experts, has developed a separate [COVID-19 outbreak management guidance](#) for long-term care (LTC) and seniors' assisted living (AL) settings.

The new outbreak management guidance provides recommendations to health authorities, facility operators and staff on managing COVID-19 cases and contacts during an outbreak at LTC and seniors' AL units/care homes that are located within or connected to LTC care homes. It reflects current orders from the Provincial Health Officer, public health recommendations and Ministry policies for LTC settings.

#### What is changing?

- Single designated "social visitor" is now called the "designated visitor." These are visitors who help to meet the need for emotional connection and support.
- Visitor testing will continue, but is limited to a maximum of three tests per week for each visitor
- End-of-life visits are exempt from testing

#### What stays the same?

- Residents may have one designated visitor (and an alternate or back up for extenuating circumstances)
- Essential visitors will continue (designated and essential visits can be at the same time)
- Visits can continue with COVID-19 activity in the home under guidance and direction from the local medical health officer
- Visitors 12 and over need a rapid test
- Masks must be worn for the duration of visits
- Visitors must be vaccinated - the only medical exemptions that can be accepted are from the Medical Deferral Form for Visitors to Health Care Facilities

The full overview is available on the [BC Centre for Disease Control website](#).



## COVID-19 VACCINATION

### VCH launches dedicated supports for children receiving COVID-19 vaccine

VCH COVID-19 vaccination clinics are offering dedicated supports to children five to 11. When booking their child's appointment through the [Get Vaccinated](#) system, parents and guardians can choose options based on their child's specific care needs.

VCH began operating dedicated children's clinics in December 2021 and these supports will help children, parents and guardians have a positive and child-centred experience while getting vaccinated, tailored to meet the needs of each child.

On Jan. 25, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) issued updated recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children five to 11 years of age, in light of new data on vaccine safety. NACI now recommends that a complete series of Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine should be offered to children in this age group who do not have contraindications to the vaccine, with a dosing interval of at least eight weeks between the first and second dose.

#### VCH child-friendly vaccination options

Children five to 11 are welcomed at all VCH vaccination clinics, each of which have health-care professionals trained to support children and their parents or guardians though the vaccination process. For children who need additional support during their vaccination, parents and guardians can access the following options.

For a child-specific experience, look for an "Ages 5 to 11" specific appointment at vaccination clinics throughout the VCH region via the Get Vaccinated system.

For children who require a quieter space, book an appointment at a clinic with individual rooms via the Get Vaccinated system. These clinics include:

- Vancouver:** George Pearson ages 5 to 11 clinic
- Richmond:** Pacific Autism Family Network ages 5 to 11 clinic
- North Shore:** ICBC Age 5-11 Clinic

For children with special needs, such as autism, sensory processing, or needle phobia, call to set up an appointment in a specialized setting: **Central Intake (all VCH communities):** 604-263-7377

Getting children vaccinated from COVID-19 provides a number of critical benefits. While children five to 11 years are at a lower risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 than other cohorts, vaccination will reduce the risk further. The protection afforded by vaccination can also help children and families continue to engage in important activities, including attending school and recreational activities, and minimize disruptions to family life and education due to self-isolation. These factors significantly benefit the physical and mental health of children, which has been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Further, as requirements for travel in Canada and other countries continue to shift, vaccination of eligible family members with World Health Organization-approved vaccines may facilitate family travel.

COVID-19 vaccination information and resources, including guidance on how to prepare children for vaccination, can be found on the [BCCDC website](#).

## IMITS

### Code Grey: planned system-wide outage on Feb. 13

On Sunday, Feb. 13 from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 14, the [network will be down at all health authority sites across the province](#). This planned Code Grey is required to upgrade equipment in four key data centres that support clinical systems across the province.

All staff, clinicians and physicians across the province's health organizations working from 7 p.m. on Feb. 13 to 6 a.m. on Feb. 14 will be impacted.

During this time, all clinical and corporate applications and systems will be unavailable. Please visit [PHSA's POB](#) (network access required) for a more detailed list of affected applications.

All impacted areas will be instructed to use their downtime procedures and refrain from using their workstations for the duration of the upgrade, unless directed otherwise by their leaders. By using downtime procedures, the impacts to patient-care systems can be better managed. Following the upgrade, staff will not experience changes to how systems function.

More information will be shared in advance of the outage. If you have any concerns, please speak with your unit or medical leader.

## oneVCH virtual town hall

### Upcoming oneVCH virtual townhall - Feb. 10

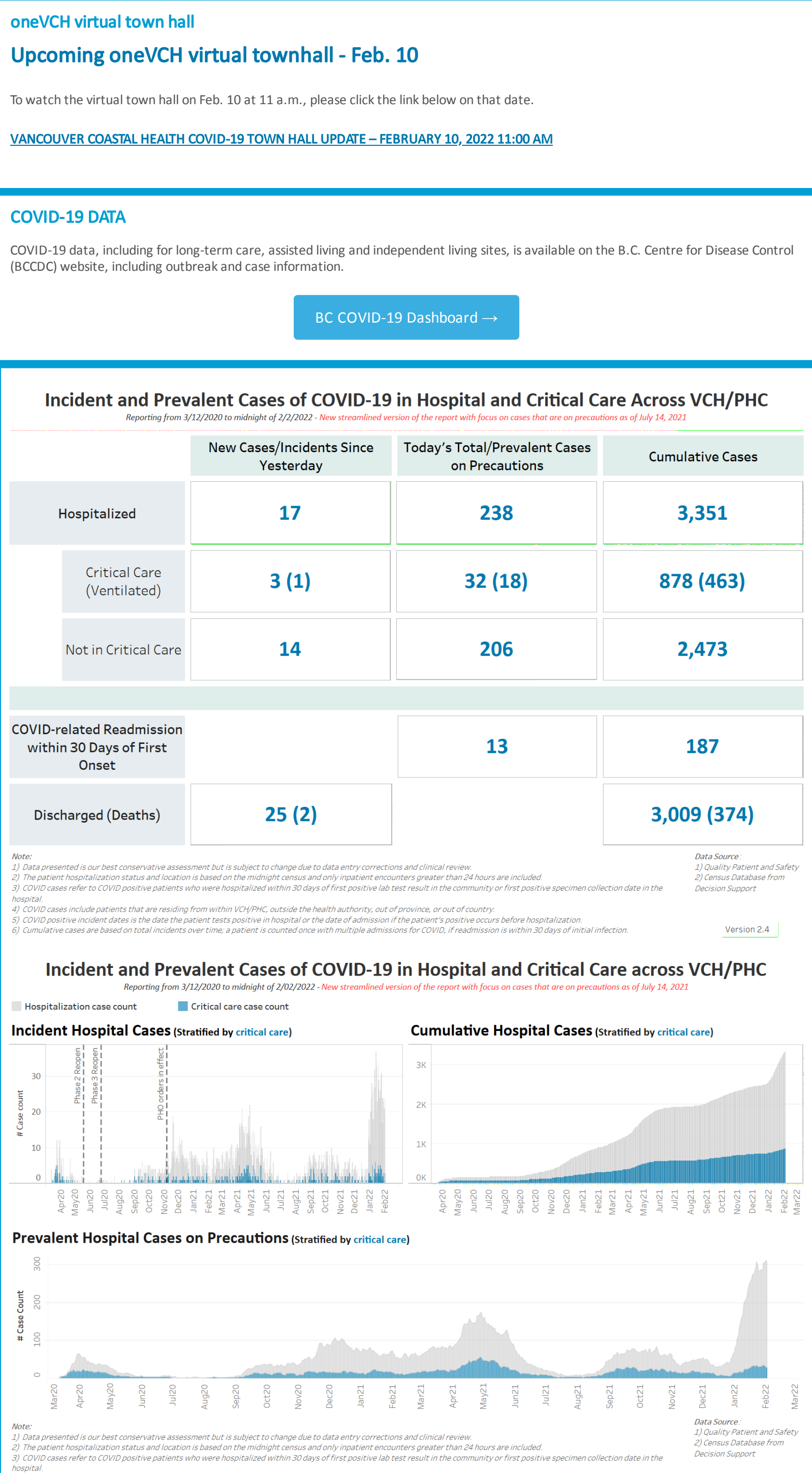
To watch the virtual town hall on Feb. 10 at 11 a.m., please click the link below on that date.

[VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH COVID-19 TOWN HALL UPDATE – FEBRUARY 10, 2022 11:00 AM](#)

## COVID-19 DATA

COVID-19 data, including for long-term care, assisted living and independent living sites, is available on the B.C. Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) website, including outbreak and case information.

[BC COVID-19 Dashboard](#) →



## KEY LINKS

- [Text Alerts: Physician sign up keyword: COVID19](#)
- [Text Alerts: Staff sign up keyword: ALERT](#)
- [Staff supports during COVID-19](#)
- [Medical staff resources during COVID-19](#)

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- [BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support](#)
- [COVID-19 Multilingual Resources](#)
- [LifeWorks Employee and Family Assistance Program Services](#)
- [VCH Virtual Health website](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) website:](#) Staff resources on how to assess, test and treat patients and protect patients and staff.
- [Infection Prevention and Control Policy:](#) Ministry of Health
- [VCH Regional Pandemic Outbreak Response Plan:](#) VCH Communicable Disease Control website
- [VCH Intranet:](#) COVID-19 updates

## REGIONAL EOC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

- [COVID-19 VCH-PHC Regional EOC](#)

## COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

[Please click here to submit questions or comments.](#)

## REMINDER ABOUT MEDIA

If you receive a media inquiry, please contact our Public Affairs team immediately for support. Our media line is **604-202-2012** or email [media@vch.ca](mailto:media@vch.ca).

The bulletins are distributed on Thursdays. Past bulletins are available on the [COVID-19 section of our VCH staff intranet](#).