



Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer

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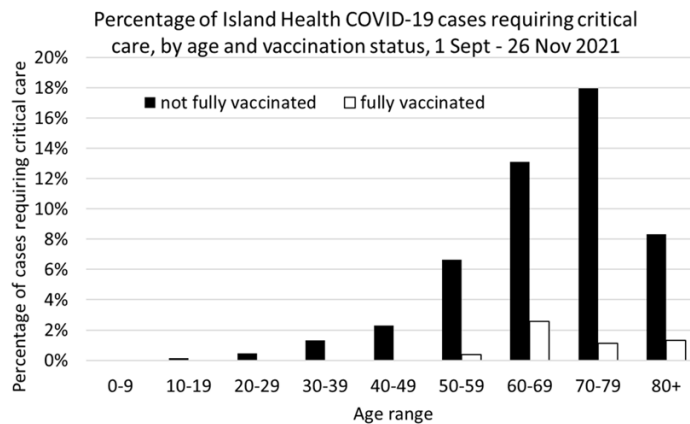
December 13, 2021

COVID-19 Update #20

COVID-19 Status Update

Vaccination continues to be our number one protective measure to decrease the burden on the population from severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalization, and death.

- Rolling 7-day average of daily case counts in the region remains stable and undulating between 50-80 cases since early August.
Most severe infections are occurring in unvaccinated individuals.
While Island Health case counts have remained relatively stable, numbers of severe infectious cases in hospital and critical care are decreasing.
COVID-19 continues to be a mild illness in children.



Omicron Variant Update

- The WHO has advised against travel bans and indicates more information will become available about Omicron severity over the coming weeks.
Early features from local analysis suggest that while transmissibility is increased, severity does not appear to be increased.
Of over 1100 cases in 33 countries, reviewed by European CDC, all cases for which there is available information on severity were either asymptomatic or mild. Very few deaths have been reported among the cases so far.
Initial information supports vaccine effectiveness against Omicron.
> Vaccines should work against Omicron in reducing the likelihood of serious outcomes, says WHO (bbc.in/3oC6TtY)
> Omicron Scientific Brief: December 2, 2021 (bit.ly/31L1eZy)
> ECDC Epidemiological Update: Omicron Variant of Concern - data as of December 7, 2021 (bit.ly/3GuuvGV)
> Public Health Ontario Omicron Evidence Brief (bit.ly/3dQnMLj)

Physicians can Meet Together on Site

As outlined in Step 3 of the BC Restart Plan, workplaces are allowed to hold seminars and meetings. Workplaces should have a Communicable Disease Plan. (bit.ly/3rPSM6n)

- The most important intervention to reduce COVID-19 impacts and transmission is being fully vaccinated.
Additional measures that may be helpful at this time include:
Health checks - no one to attend if they are ill with fever and cough
Appropriate respectful distancing between individuals
Working ventilation



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COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control: Guidance for Primary Care Practitioners, Community-Based Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Nurses and Midwives in Clinic Settings

As of September, the new guidance, according to the BCCDC, "physical distancing or maintaining a distance of two metres between two or more people" is no longer required, and "capacity limited for higher occupancy waiting rooms/areas" are no longer required.

- The Province of BC is transitioning to the phrase "use a respectful distance", which can be different for individuals based on cultural norms and personal preferences.
In addition, clinics are no longer required to have a COVID-19 Safety Site Plan, and are instead required to have and use a Communicable Disease Plan.
Employers must also be prepared to implement additional prevention measures as required by a Medical Health Officer or the Provincial Health Officer to deal with communicable diseases in their workplace or region, should those be necessary.
BCCDC is also transitioning their references to the respectful distancing language, see this poster.

Cell Mediated COVID-19 Immunity -- Don't fret about waning antibodies!

As the booster immunization campaign is unfolding, it is important to consider the different modes of immunity, humoral and cell mediated. While the role of CMI in the defense against COVID-19 is not yet fully understood, there is some suggestion that experiencing milder symptoms of re-infection or infection post-vaccine may be a result of the activation of CMI. Vaccine induced T-cell immunity resembles that of natural infection and mRNA vaccines generate antigen-specific T-cells in a coordinated immune response.

- Rapid Induction of Antigen-specific CD4+T cells associated with Coordinated Humoral and Cellular Immunity
People Testing Negative for COVID-19 despite Exposure may have Immune Memory

Vaccine Campaigns for Ages 5-11 Primary Series, and Population Boosters are Underway

The most important intervention against COVID-19 remains the first dose of vaccine. Please continue to work with your vaccine-hesitant patients with supporting resources:

- Patient-oriented Q+A
Healthcare Provider Communication Tool
BCCDC Toolkit for Health Professionals

Island Health Immunization Coverage by Age and Doses

Table with 3 columns: Dose, 5+, 12+. Rows include Dose 1, Dose 2, Dose 3 CEV, and Booster 18+.