

Omicron Variant & COVID-19 Cases Accelerating – January 5, 2022



Yesterday, Dr. Bonnie Henry said the Omicron variant now accounts for more than 80% of COVID-19 cases in British Columbia (BC). There were no new provincial health orders issued this week, however, Dr. Henry advised businesses to plan how they will stay open when staff are isolating, and mentioned that "the interruption to our business continuity is something we need to think more about... we need to anticipate that as many as one-third of a workforce might be ill and forced to stay away." The Omicron variant has a shorter incubation period, transmits faster, and for many who contract COVID-19, its symptoms are similar to other illnesses like cold or influenza. The requirement to self-isolate after testing positive for COVID-19 is being reduced to five days for vaccinated people without symptoms. Hospitalizations and ICU admissions in BC are "slowly creeping up," but have not yet reached levels seen during the Delta wave.

COVID-19 hospitalizations are increasing in Island Health. Yesterday, Island Health had 40 active cases in hospital, and another 28 hospitalized for COVID who are no longer infectious. That is an increase of 21 patients in the past week. In critical care, we've increased from 9 to 16 active cases in the past week. Hospital occupancy across Island Health is high right now, and the impact is amplified by staffing shortages. Island Health is working to determine if the Omicron variant impacts length of stay for patients requiring hospitalization, however it is too early to determine conclusively.

Being fully vaccinated is the best protection against COVID-19 and we are happy to share that just over 50% of all healthcare workers in the Island Region have received their booster dose for COVID-19. Island Health is ramping up vaccination capacity for the COVID-19 Booster campaign and [looking for interest](#) from physicians and healthcare workers in joining the immunization team. 2nd doses for kids aged 5 to 11 are rolling out in the coming weeks with more information to follow as it becomes available.

All healthcare workers, including those in private offices who have signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should call 1-833-737-9377 to access testing. PCR tests **are prioritized for HCWs**. Rapid tests have been deployed to Island Health testing centres, and our call centre is arranging pick up of test kits for symptomatic people. Rapid tests will be deployed to Island Health acute and long term care sites this week.

Island Health Region Total Vaccines Administered To Date	% Population Immunized (12+) 2nd Dose To Date	% Population Immunized (5+) 2nd Dose To Date	% Population Immunized (18+) Two Doses & Boosters To Date
1,604,737	90.9%	85.0%	23.9%

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

[Rapid COVID-19 Point of Care Screening Program](#)

- Point-of-care (POC) test kits can be used to rapidly screen people for COVID-19 in select settings to reduce the chances of outbreaks and control the spread of COVID-19.

[Self-reporting Positive COVID-19 Test Results: BCCDC Portal](#)

- It is important for primary care providers and all people in BC to self-report a positive COVID-19 test result. Confidential self-reporting through the BCCDC portal provides contact tracers with important information to help determine those in the population who may need additional supports during the course of their infection.

[Expression of Interest for Delivering COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

- Are you a midwife, nurse practitioner, naturopath or physician interested in joining the team administering COVID-19 vaccines? Island Health invites you to register your interest by completing the survey.

Medical Orders for Scope of Treatment (MOST)

- A MOST is a doctor or nurse practitioner's order that has 6 different levels of treatment that range from comfort care to critical care. Ideally a MOST is completed following advance care planning and Goals of Care conversations. A MOST can be changed at any time.
 - Practitioners are encouraged to provide patients with the [Patient & Family Conversation Tool](#) and the "[Is CPR Right for Me?](#)" pamphlet can help patients decide which options are best for them.

[Past Issues of the Island Health Primary Care Update](#)

The Island Health Archive for past issues of the Primary Care Update.

LINKS, RESOURCES & FAQs

BCCDC Resources:

- [New Today](#): This section of the website highlights the latest guidance documents and updates to the website for health professionals.
- [About the vaccines](#)
- [Resources for Health Professionals](#)
- [Reporting adverse events](#)

Doctors of BC:

- [Info for doctors getting or giving the vaccine](#)
- [Updated toolkit for doctors' offices](#)

Frequently Asked Questions:

- [ImmunizeBC FAQ](#)