



New Virtual Treatment Assessment Service – February 23, 2022

Today, Dr. Bonnie Henry and Minister Dix announced the launch of an online COVID-19 screening and virtual assessment service for people in British Columbia who test positive and who may benefit from new antiviral treatments. This new virtual service includes a [four-step process](#), starting with a self-assessment – a physician and pharmacist team will decide if treatment is safe and appropriate as part of this process (through phone consultation). For clarity, Island Health will continue to provide services through the [Outpatient COVID-19 Therapeutics Clinic](#) (250-737-2030, extension 44685). For the latest information on new COVID-19 treatment options consult the latest [Government of BC](#) and [Doctors of BC](#) treatment websites.

The province also announced a shift in the Get Vaccinated campaign – moving forward, vaccines for those aged 12 and older will be done primarily in pharmacies. In Island Health, the process to ramp down our mass vaccination clinics is getting underway, and we'll share more details as plans are developed. About 800 pharmacies throughout B.C. – including about 170 in Island Health - are now participating in the COVID-19 vaccine program, enabling regional health authorities to concentrate their efforts on delivering vaccines to children aged five to 11 - [online instructions](#) detail how parents can book appointments for their kids.

We know people who have had COVID-19 are waiting three months to book their booster based on Provincial Health Office (PHO) guidance. The [Get Vaccinated](#) system will continue to send reminders to patients for a booster; please invite your patients to book three months after infection.

A new vaccine, Novavax, has been approved by Health Canada and is expected to arrive in BC soon. This is another option for people who remain unvaccinated and have not yet received any of the COVID-19 vaccines. Novavax is a Protein Subunit vaccine which could be appealing for people that have been hesitant to take an mRNA vaccine. It is recommended for anyone 18+ who has not yet received a COVID-19 vaccine. When available, Novavax vaccinations can be booked through the provincial call centre at 1.833.838.2323.

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the BC Pharmacy Association, is shipping COVID-19 rapid tests to community pharmacies throughout the province. Starting as early as this Friday, Feb. 25, 2022, people aged 70 years and older can pick up one kit containing five tests every 28 days from participating pharmacies at no cost. Individuals must present their personal health number when picking up the kit or, if others are picking up kits on their behalf, in addition to the individual's name and personal health number, date of birth must also be supplied. This program will expand to younger age groups as supply increases in the coming weeks. At-home kits are also being distributed to families through K-12 schools, with each child being given a 5-pack of tests to take home for future use.

Dr. Henry said yesterday the provincial seven-day average of COVID-19 tests coming back positive is 9.7 per cent in British Columbia, it's the first time it's dipped below 10 per cent since Dec. 23. Provincial health officials also reported yesterday that hospitalizations, which typically lag behind spikes and dips in new cases, are down by 14 per cent from last

Tuesday. There are now 108 patients in critical care provincially, which is down by 15 per cent from 124 a week ago and down by 20 per cent from a month ago when 130 people were in the ICU. Deaths also lag cases, with the higher numbers being a reflection of Omicron's surge last month; in the past 96 hours, 44 new deaths have been reported, for an overall total of 2,830.

Last week, the Government of BC eased some of the public health restrictions. Indoor personal gatherings have returned to normal, and with masks and the BC Vaccine Card in place, capacity limits have been lifted for indoor and outdoor events, fitness centres and sports, and restaurants, bars and nightclubs. Protective measures that remain in place will be reviewed before Spring Break (March 15) and again before Easter (April 12) including the mask mandate for indoor public spaces, the BC Vaccine Card, visitation restrictions for long-term care, school and childcare guidelines and COVID safety plans.

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
1,927,088	92.8%	88.6%	59.6%

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

COVID-19 Treatment Options & Information Resources

There are some treatments available for people who have mild to moderate symptoms who are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. The Government of BC is recommending that health authorities directly provide the following information resources on COVID-19 treatment options:

- Government of BC – [COVID-19 Treatments](#)
- Doctors of BC – [COVID-19 Treatments](#)

Doctors of BC: Guidance on Prescribing COVID-19 Anti-Viral Medications

Doctors of BC hosted a [recorded Town Hall](#) on Prescribing Therapies for Mild-Moderate COVID-19 and shared the attached presentation.

- Presenters: Jolanta Piszczek, Jennifer Grant, Dr. Eric Partlow, Maureen O'Donnell

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](#)