

Omicron Subvariants and Monkeypox in British Columbia (BC) – July 6, 2022

We're pleased to announce Dr. Réka Gustafson will join Island Health in September 2022 as Vice President, Population & Public Health and Chief Medical Health Officer. Dr. Murray Fyfe, the interim Chief Medical Health Officer, has served in temporary capacity since Dr. Richard Stanwick's retirement earlier this year. In this role, Dr. Gustafson will lead Island Health's population and public health teams as they continue to respond to the toxic drug supply crisis and pandemic response and recovery. She will oversee our team of Medical Health Officers and work closely with senior leaders at Island Health to drive quality improvements and ground strategies and initiatives throughout the organization.

Dr. Murray Fyfe shared at today's Medical Leaders Townhall that recent modeling points to a third wave of the Covid-19 Omicron subvariant, and that the BA.4 and BA.5 strains are spreading more in recent weeks, with no increase in severity of illness to date. Quebec is witnessing a significant surge in Covid-19 cases, and Island Health is experiencing about 7-8 cases per day, with 64 people currently in our regional hospitals. The Government of BC has been actively discussing the possibility of a booster campaign this fall. In the next few weeks, COVID-19 vaccine manufactures may have approval for new Omicron-resistant vaccines which could be available this summer in time for a provincial campaign.

Monkeypox is spreading across the world and in Canada, with 7000 reported international cases and 12 confirmed cases in BC. The primary transmission cohort is men who have sex with men. There are no treatments specifically for monkeypox virus infections; however, monkeypox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar, and antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox may be used to prevent and treat monkeypox virus infections. Antivirals, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), may be recommended for people who are more likely to get severely ill, for example patients with weakened immune systems.

Island Health Region Total Vaccines Administered To Date	% Population Immunized (12+) 2nd Dose To Date	% Population Immunized (5+) 2nd Dose To Date	% Population Immunized (12+) Two Doses & Boosters To Date
2,076,124	93.8%	90.9%	66.0%

NEW RESOURCES

[Doctors of BC – The Future of Primary Care – Have Your Say – Online Engagement Platform](#)

Doctors of BC is seeking physician input on actions and solutions to address the primary care challenges in BC

[Doctors of BC – New Temporary Fee Item for Assessment and Treatment of COVID-19](#)

The [fee is payable](#) (requires members access) for patient care related to COVID-19 treatment, including patient assessment, prescribing of COVID-19 therapeutics, completion of relevant documentation and forms, and arranging for treatment. May be provided either in-person and/or by telehealth.

[Update: BCCDC COVID-19 Guidance for Health-care Workers: Return to Work and Exposures](#)

The *Interim Guidance on Return to Work for Health-Care Workers with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 and Management of Health-Care Worker Exposures to COVID-19* has been updated and posted to the [Return to work and management of exposures for health-care workers](#) page.

Update: BCCBC COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility

Updates to the [Immunization Manual](#) include eligibility information for second booster doses to address exceptions for a second booster dose for those 60- 69 years of age.

Medical Health Officers Newsletter No. 342 on Monkeypox

Although Monkeypox has not been detected within the Island Health region, healthcare providers should be aware and consider Monkeypox based on clinical presentation and epidemiological risk factors and report to Communicable Disease Prevention & Control if Monkeypox is suspected.

BCCDC Updates on Monkeypox for Health Professionals

Information was updated for both the public and health care professionals about Monkeypox:

- [New interim infection prevention and control guidance was posted by PICNet](#)
- [Interim guidelines for public health management of cases and contacts associated with monkeypox have been published in the Communicable Disease Control Manual](#)

Medical Health Officers Newsletter No. 341 on Climate Change and Hotter, Drier Summers

Hotter, drier summers bring extreme heat, wild fire and drought, and cause increases in number of individuals presenting to clinical care with ailments directly caused or aggravated by climate change.

Prepared BC – Extreme Heat Preparedness Guide

Dr. Bonnie Henry is encouraging all healthcare professionals to read the guide to help physicians, families, and communities prepare for the next Extreme Heat Emergency in BC.

Perkopolis (Perk Program) for Physicians

Island Health is partnered with Canadian-based Perkopolis to offer Island Health employees, physicians, volunteers and auxiliary members access to discounts and special offers.

- [Register Here](#) for Perkopolis – Please note the following:
 - Use [Chrome Browser](#)
 - Use your firstname.lastname@islandhealth.ca email address; private accounts will not register.
 - For further questions, email epp@islandhealth.ca with the details so they can further assist.

Past Issues of the Island Health Primary Care Update

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

LINKS & 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](#)