

LATEST UPDATE – Mar. 23, 2021

In an effort to keep our community partners connected, we are providing you with regular COVID-19 updates.

Ministry of Health update

In yesterday's joint statement on B.C.'s COVID-19 response, Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, and Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, reported 1,785 new cases during the past three days.

- Friday to Saturday: 556 new cases
- Saturday to Sunday: 598 new cases
- Sunday to Monday: 631 new cases

Of the new cases, 469 people were in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region.

Across the province, there were 16 new COVID-19 related deaths, while 303 people are currently hospitalized, with 80 of these cases receiving treatment in ICU/critical care. The total number of individuals who have passed away due to COVID-19 is 1,437. There are 5,290 active cases of COVID-19 across B.C. currently.

The total number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in B.C. now stands at 92,571 since the start of the pandemic.

There are 166 new confirmed COVID-19 cases that are variants of concern in our province, for a total of 1,366 cases. Of the total cases, 237 are active and the remaining people have recovered. This includes 1,240 cases of the B.1.1.7 (U.K.) variant, 41 cases of the B.1.351 (South Africa) variant and 85 cases of the P.1 (Brazil) variant.

The variants of concern are increasing and they transmit more easily, making it increasingly difficult to stop the spread. These escalating new cases reflect the transmission is in workplaces and indoor gatherings that contravene public health orders.

Dr. Henry said indoor gatherings – of any size – continue to be high risk. The only safe place for us to gather with our small groups of friends or family right now – with no more than 10 people – is outside. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and friends are still at risk of severe illness. This means spring weddings, birthday parties or other occasions need to be pushed to summertime, when it will once again be far safer for us to spend time with others.

Vaccination update

Since the start of immunizations, 539,408 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca-SII COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in B.C., 87,161 of which are second doses

The latest AstraZeneca-SII COVID-19 vaccine trials have shown high effectiveness to protect people from illness – much greater than what was originally shown. Dr. Henry called this very good news, saying the efficacy for even mild illness is very high and it is similar to what we saw with the Pfizer and Moderna clinical trials against hospitalization and severe illness.

She said B.C. continues to monitor the safety signals around the world, and is reassured by the investigation in Germany by the European Medicines Agency, that shows clotting remains extremely rare with the millions of vaccinations being given out around the world.

Last week, Dr. Henry spoke about the two parallel vaccination programs that we have. The AstraZeneca-SII vaccine program is on a parallel track to the Pfizer and Moderna age-based risk program. This parallel track, allows more flexibility in dealing with outbreaks in our community now and addressing hotspots and high-risk areas, so that we can protect workers and, in turn, protect our communities.

Updated information on who should get a COVID-19 vaccine can be found [here](#) and there is more information about vaccine after care [here](#). More information and immunization data is available through this page: [BCCDC](#).

Vaccinations for the clinically extremely vulnerable

People at higher risk from COVID-19 due to existing medical conditions, such as various forms of cancer, transplant recipients and severe respiratory conditions, will be able to register for their COVID-19 vaccine beginning Monday, March 29, 2021.

The accelerated timelines for B.C.'s COVID-19 immunization plan mean approximately 200,000 people in B.C. aged 16 years and older who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are eligible to receive their first dose of

COVID-19 vaccine in the coming weeks. Some of the CEV population will have already been immunized as part of B.C.'s age-based vaccine program (currently 75 years and older).

Expert physicians and providers in cancer care, kidney diseases and other conditions causing compromised immunity worked with public health and international COVID-19 data to define B.C.'s updated CEV list to ensure those most at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are prioritized first (click here for more [information](#)).

Those people identified as CEV will receive a letter in the mail in the coming days with information on how to book an appointment, beginning March 29, 2021. People who receive this invitation letter must bring it with them to their vaccination appointment.

If people who believe they are in the CEV group have not received a letter by April 15, 2021, they can contact the provincial call centre or visit the get vaccinated provincial online registration and booking system, which is scheduled to launch on April 6, to confirm if they are on the CEV list. If they are not on the CEV list, they can reach out to their physician or nurse practitioner about their eligibility.

The CEV-based booking process will run parallel to the ongoing age-based booking schedule.

Updates to VCH's implementation of Phase 2 of B.C.'s immunization plan

The age-based vaccine rollout using the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines is accelerating and moving forward ahead of schedule. The following ages are invited to call **1.877.587.5767** to book their COVID-19 vaccination appointment according beginning at noon on their respective dates:

People in Richmond, Vancouver, North Vancouver and West Vancouver

- Tuesday, March 23: seniors **77 years** of age and older
- Wednesday, March 24: seniors **76 years** of age and older
- Thursday, March 25: seniors **75 years** of age and older
- Friday, March 26: seniors **74 years** of age and older
- Monday, March 29: 74 years and clinically extremely vulnerable (must have letter – see above)

People on the Sunshine Coast, Powell River, Sea to Sky and Bowen Island

- Seniors **70 years** of age and older

Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit)

- Indigenous peoples **55 years** of age and older

The call-in schedule for the age 70 to 74 cohort will be announced in the coming days.

To prepare for your call, please have available a pen and paper, personal health number, full name, date of birth, postal code and phone number. There are enough appointments available for all seniors and there is no rush to call in. Call volumes are lower in the late afternoon and evening. The appointment booking toll-free phone line is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week. Please tell the agent the name of the community you live in when calling for your vaccine appointment.

VCH is appealing to family members, friends, neighbours and social services agencies to help reach eligible seniors in the community. Please share this COVID-19 vaccination update with eligible seniors and Indigenous peoples along with Elders, to help them plan and book their appointment.

In partnership with [S.U.C.C.E.S.S.](#), VCH is pleased to be hosting information sessions about the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. On Saturday, March 27, learn more about the vaccine rollout during the Mandarin information session. Please click [here](#) for more information. You can also learn more about the vaccine rollout in Cantonese. Click [here](#) to watch the March 20 information session on YouTube.

The resource toolkit includes:

- **Vaccine appointments for seniors:**

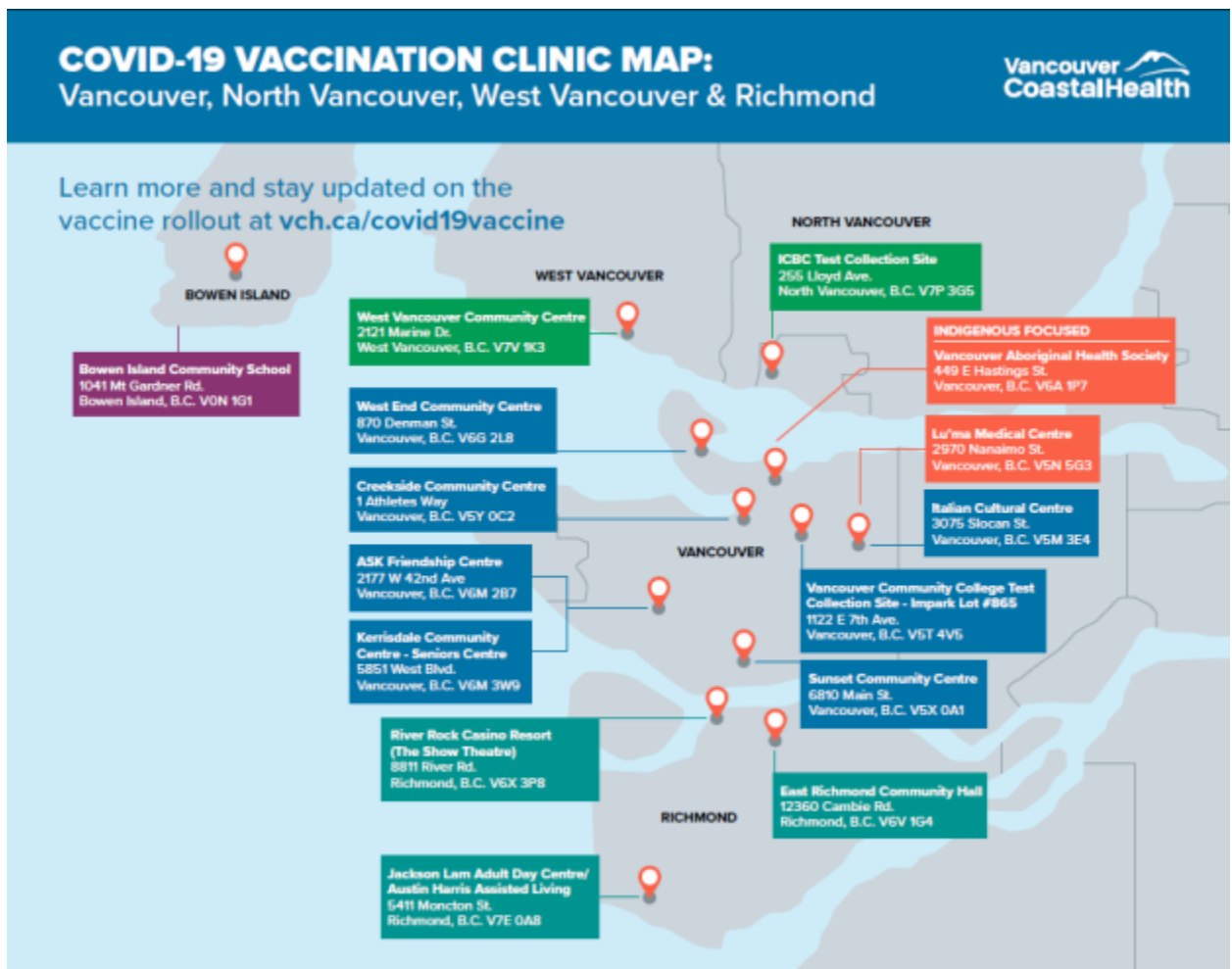
[\[English\]](#) | [\[Arabic\]](#) | [\[Chinese – Simplified\]](#) | [\[Chinese – Traditional\]](#) | [\[Farsi\]](#) | [\[French\]](#) | [\[Hindi\]](#) | [\[Japanese\]](#) | [\[Korean\]](#) | [\[Punjabi\]](#) | [\[Spanish\]](#) | [\[Tagalog\]](#) | [\[Vietnamese\]](#)

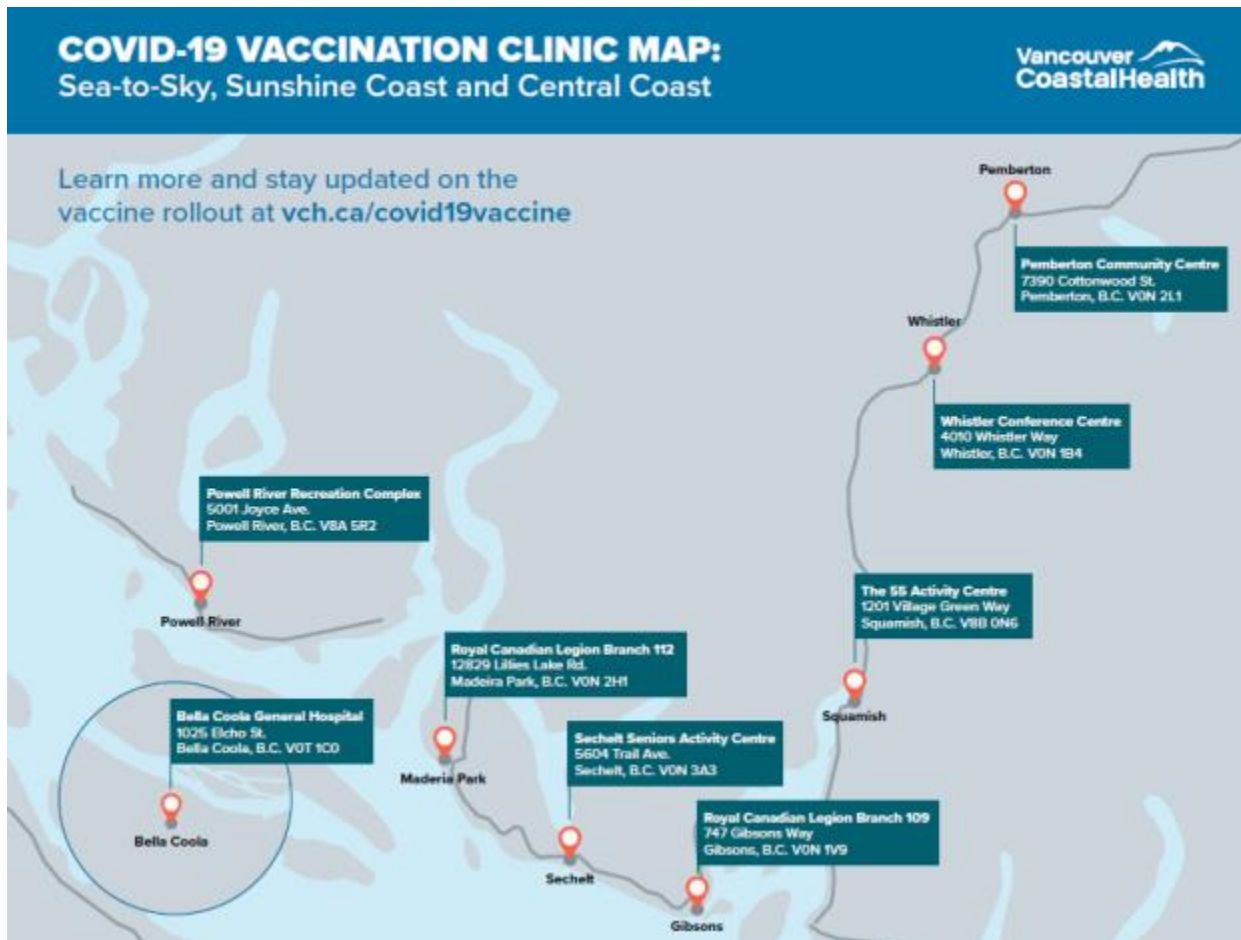
- **After-care information:**

[\[English\]](#) | [\[Arabic\]](#) | [\[ASL\]](#) | [\[Chinese – Simplified\]](#) | [\[Chinese – Traditional\]](#) | [\[Farsi\]](#) | [\[French\]](#) | [\[Korean\]](#) | [\[Punjabi\]](#) | [\[Spanish\]](#) | [\[Tigrinya\]](#) | [\[Vietnamese\]](#)

VCH releases vaccination clinic locations

A reminder that when you book your vaccination appointment, you will be directed to one of the following vaccination clinics. More information on the vaccine rollout and clinics can be found [here](#). And if you would like to share these maps, they can be found [here](#).





Surgical renewal update

A year after non-urgent surgeries were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest progress reports show further transformation of the surgical system in British Columbia to get more patients the surgeries they need faster. As of Feb. 4, 2021, health authorities had completed 95% of these 15,373 surgeries.

On March 16, 2020, non-urgent scheduled surgeries were postponed to ensure hospitals had the capacity for COVID-19 patients. This resulted in 32,400 fewer scheduled surgeries representing approximately 17,400 patients who had a booked scheduled surgery date postponed, and approximately 15,500 patients who would have been scheduled for surgery but were not due to COVID-19.

On May 7, 2020, the surgical renewal commitment to patients was launched, and on May 18, non-urgent scheduled surgeries resumed. When patients were contacted for surgery, some – in consultation with their surgeon – decided not to proceed. As of this reporting period, that left 15,373 postponed scheduled surgeries to be delivered.

Health Minister Adrian Dix said that through the surgical renewal commitment, we are getting more patients through their surgery faster. When something as critical as surgical renewal is working so well, you don't pause, you don't let up, you go full steam ahead.

More details, including work done to increase surgical capacity in B.C., can be found [here](#).

Testing

Anyone in the VCH region with cold, influenza or COVID-19-like symptoms, however mild, can now be assessed for and get a COVID-19 test. Contact your physician or nurse practitioner's office, or a local community collection centre to arrange for a test. Phone numbers and locations of collection centres can be found by visiting: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing> or by calling 8-1-1. For more information and latest updates on COVID-19, follow the BC Centre for Disease Control on Twitter @CDCofBC or visit the website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>.

Other resources

To find the Provincial Health Officer's orders, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

To see a map of COVID-19 cases by local health area, visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data>

For a listing of the **community exposure events**, go to: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/public-exposures>

For the **latest medical updates**, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing, visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>

For **community engagement opportunities** at VCH, see: <http://cean.vch.ca/members/current-opportunities/>