

COVID-19 Immunization Update – March 2, 2021

On March 1, the Government of BC and Ministry of Health announced the next steps in the Immunize BC covid-19 immunization plans. Phase 2 of this plan has begun today and will continue until April 12, 2021. All of the information about the immunization strategy and the phased approach can be found on the BCCDC web [here](#).

I want to thank you for your leadership and commitment during this past year. It has not been easy, and with the exceptional support from our partners in the North, we are able to see the end of this journey and a return to some normalcy. Thank you again!

Phase 2 Sequencing until April 12

In March, we will be completing Phase 1 immunizations, including immunizations for anyone in Phase 1 who was missed. In addition to Northern Health staff and medical staff, the vaccine will be offered to the following Phase 2 groups in March:

- People receiving long-term home support services and staff.
- Seniors and high-risk people residing in independent living and senior's supportive housing (including staff),
- Those aged 70+ that are living with those in independent living or long-term home support services.
- Residents and staff in congregate settings:
 - Shelters;
 - Supportive seniors projects;
 - Supportive housing;
 - Adult group homes;
 - Mental Health & Substance Use group settings;
 - Community Living BC; and
 - Correctional facilities.

Beginning March 8, 2021, **seniors aged 80+ born before 1941 and Indigenous people aged 65+ (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) born in or before 1956**, who are not living in independent living or senior's supportive housing, can make one call to book their appointment through Northern Health's call centre according to a staggered schedule. There is no requirement to register before booking. Immunization clinic locations will be confirmed at the time of booking, with vaccinations starting as early as March 15.

The contact information for the Northern Health region, complete call-in schedules, hours of operations and step-by-step instructions on how to call to book an appointment or to book an appointment for a loved one will be available on March 8, 2021, through www.gov.bc.ca/bcseniorsfirst, and on the Northern Health [website](#). The toll free phone number is 1-844-255-7555. **More Details will be provided on this over the coming week.**

Second Dose

Dr. Henry, Provincial Health Officer has made the decision to delay the administration of the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine to 16 weeks after the first dose. This decision has been made after careful review of the evidence in B.C., Canada and international jurisdictions. As a result, Northern Health will be delaying all Dose 2 immunizations and clinics as of today, March 1, 2021. The second dose will be provided 16 weeks following the first dose and clinics will be organized to accommodate this new time frame.

The Canadian National Immunization Advisory Committee has concluded that there is a benefit to extending the time between first and second doses to four months. In BC, the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Health has decided that it is in the best interests of British Columbians to have as many people as possible immunized with the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as feasible dependent on vaccine supply.

- Is it safe for my second dose to be delayed?
 - Yes, Health Canada supports a longer delay between first and second doses. Many countries have delayed second doses and found that people still have a strong immune response against COVID-19.
- Am I protected by one dose?
 - Studies around the world are showing that even one dose of COVID-19 vaccine provides very good protection against transmission of COVID-19 and serious illness.

Notes

1. All direct care providers will have the opportunity to be immunized in Phases 1 and 2.
2. Eligible groups could be expanded based on direction from the provincial immunization program.
3. The immunization plan is dependent on vaccine delivery and may be amended.
4. Information regarding how the Astra Zeneca vaccine that has recently been approved in Canada will be used most strategically in British Columbia will be available within the next couple of weeks.

Sincerely,

**Cathy Ulrich
CEO & President
Northern Health**

**Colleen Nyce
Board Chair
Northern Health**