

March 29, 2021 – Phase 3 Nears with New Cases Rising

The Island Health region achieved an important milestone at the end of last week with 100,000 first doses issued – approximately 15% of the region is immunized against COVID-19. As we move into Phase 3 slightly ahead of schedule, vaccine appointment bookings are now open for people 73 or older and Indigenous peoples over 55, and to individuals who have received special written notice from Dr. Bonnie Henry regarding their status as clinically extremely vulnerable (see below).

Today, Premier John Horgan, Health Minister Adrian Dix, and Dr. Bonnie Henry issued an ‘urgent and immediate call to action’ to stop the exponential growth in COVID-19 transmissions, and a surge in variants of concern (VOC). The Premier made a direct appeal to those aged 20-39 to curtail their social activity. In addition, Dr. Henry announced a three-week ‘circuit breaker’, with new and amended orders and guidelines in effect through April 19, 2021 (see below).

Dr. Henry also explained today there are now 413 active cases of VOC in the province. Most are B.1.1.7 (UK), which is shown to be more transmissible, and evidence is mounting that it leads to more severe illness in younger people. Also troubling is the dramatic increase in the P.1 variant (Brazil), to 270 cases. The P.1. variant is not only more transmissible, it has been shown in some parts of the world to be less amenable to the vaccines. A P.1 cluster has been linked to Whistler, and Dr. Henry is encouraging anyone who recently travelled to Whistler who experiences even mild symptoms to self isolate and seek testing.

Dr. Bonnie Henry said the province will not be giving adults younger than 55 the AstraZeneca vaccine for the next few days. "Over this past week, a signal was detected in younger people in Europe using the AstraZeneca vaccine," she said, describing the issue as, "a very rare condition, with tens of millions of doses of this vaccine being used," and very few instances being reported. She said Health Canada has reached out to the manufacturer for more information on the "risk-benefit profile" and what it means for Canadians. Read more information from NACI.

As we move further into Phases 3 and 4 of the Province’s COVID-19 [Immunization Plan](#), everyone who is eligible will be able to receive a first dose before July 1, 2021. Island Health will also begin administering second doses to people roughly 16 weeks after they received their first dose. People will be contacted when it is time to schedule their second dose.

As of March 26-28th:

| Phase 1 Dec 2020-Feb 2021 | Phase 2 Feb-March 2021 |
|---|---|
| High-risk population | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents, staff, and essential visitors to long-term care and assisted living Individuals assessed for/awaiting long-term care Hospital health care workers who may provide care for COVID-19 patients Remote and isolated Indigenous communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors aged 80+ who are not yet immunized Indigenous seniors aged 65+, Elders, and additional communities not yet immunized Hospital staff, community GPs and medical specialists not yet immunized Vulnerable populations in select congregated settings Staff in community home support and nursing services for seniors |
| Phase 3 April-June 2021 | Phase 4 July-Sept 2021 |
| General population | |
| <p>People aged 79 to 60, in five year increments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 79 to 75 74 to 70 69 to 65 64 to 60 People aged 69 to 16 who are clinically extremely vulnerable | <p>People aged 59 to 18, in five year increments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 59 to 55 54 to 50 49 to 45 44 to 40 39 to 35 34 to 30 29 to 25 24 to 18 |
| <p>Once more vaccines are approved/available, people 64 to 18 yrs who are front-line essential workers or work in specific workplaces/industries may be included later in Phase 3.</p> | |

DAILY VACCINES
ADMINISTERED IN ISLAND
HEALTH (Mar 26-28)
11,657

TOTAL NUMBER OF VACCINES
ADMINISTERED TO-DATE:
123,723
(699,092 in BC)

% OF VACCINATED ADULT
POPULATION - 1ST DOSE:
15%
(14.2% in BC)

% OF VACCINATED ADULT
POPULATION - 2ND DOSE:
1.7%
(2% in BC)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

New and Amended Public Health Orders

Dr. Henry announced a three-week 'circuit breaker', with new and amended orders and guidelines in effect through April 19, 2021. New measures include:

- Restaurants, bars and pubs: no indoor dining – take-out, delivery or patio service only
- Gyms and fitness centres: restricted to individual or one-on-one activities only – no group indoor fitness
- Worship services: no indoor services, outdoor services under the current variance may continue
- Travel: limited to essential travel for work or medical reasons only
- Whistler-Blackcomb ski resort: closed through to April 19th to address and prevent community spread related to non-essential travel
- Work from home: where possible, workers are strongly encouraged to work from home – or return to working from home if they have returned to the workplace
- Schools: students grades 4-12 will be supported to wear masks while at school

Immunization for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable

People considered [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) will be notified in writing that they are now eligible for immunization regardless of their age cohort and will be directed to call-in and book an appointment. Letters will be delivered from March 24th to April 15th and some individuals have already received their first dose.

End of Day Doses at Mass Immunization Sites

Some members of the public who are not eligible for vaccination at this time have been showing up to immunization clinics at the end of day requesting a vaccination from remaining doses. It is not our practice to issue any remaining doses to members of the public who have not been booked for a vaccination. All clients must book an appointment to reserve a vaccination and all unused doses are reassigned on a risk-basis to priority populations.

New Visitor Guidelines for Long-term Care Facilities

[New visitor guidance](#) will go into effect on April 1, 2021. Updated documents and information about the changes will be posted to the BCCDC website in the coming days.

New South Island Integrated Breast Cancer Program & Referral Process

As part of the new Integrated Breast Cancer Program, the South Island breast cancer general surgeon group has committed to a centralized intake, pooled referral process where all referrals come into a central intake centre and where patients have the opportunity to be connected to the first available surgeon. [Read about](#) the new program and streamlined process, and familiarize yourself with the new referral form.

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](#)