

Subject: Covid-19 Updates - December 17, 2021 - Omicron and New Measures
Date: Friday, December 17, 2021 at 2:32:48 PM Pacific Standard Time
From: Ernie Baatz
To: Ernie Baatz
Attachments: image001.jpg

Hi all;

Here is the announcement from the Province on new measures that begin Sunday night. These measures are necessary to reduce the number of people getting sick with Covid. The Omicron variant is causing rapid increases in the number of people getting sick every day. When the number of people getting sick increases, the number of people that end up in hospital and in ICU also increase. When the hospitals are full with Covid-19 patients, people with other urgent health matters get delayed. We all want to know that our hospitals and healthcare workers are available to care for us if we get sick or injured.

Province introduces new COVID-19 measures for safer holiday season

To address rising COVID-19 case counts and keep people safe, the provincial health officer is issuing revised orders, which take effect on Monday, Dec. 20, 2021.

Measures will extend to Jan. 31, 2022, at 11:59 p.m., and include:

- limiting indoor, personal gatherings, including in rental and vacation properties to the household/residents plus 10 individuals, or one additional household maximum if all are aged 12 and older are fully vaccinated;
- requiring the BC Vaccine Card for organized events of all sizes and ensuring the QR code is scanned at events;
- seating requirements and restricting movement between tables at food and liquor-serving premises, and reinforcing the need to wear masks when not seated;
- limiting venues of 1,000 individuals or more to 50% of the seated capacity with reinforced masking requirements and scanning of the BC Vaccine Card QR code;
- pausing all sports tournaments while the order is in effect; and
- all New Year's Eve organized gatherings and events will be restricted to being seated-only events, with no mingling or dancing allowed.

The provincial health officer is also emphasizing the need for retail stores to have COVID-19 safety plans in place for holiday and Boxing Day sales.

“These measures will help us to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect the ones

we care about,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “Slowing the spread and keeping each other safe is a cause in which we are all connected. It’s that togetherness that will get all of us through the next days and weeks.”

B.C.’s COVID-19 case rate has nearly doubled over the past week. So far, there have been 135 cases of the Omicron variant of concern identified in B.C., with numbers expected to rise rapidly. While public health continues to monitor the impacts of Omicron, including severity of illness and hospitalizations, the recommendation is to take a cautious approach at this time.

“While vaccination remains the best defence against COVID-19, we are now dealing with the new threat of a more transmissible variant,” said Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer. “We need to take these measures until we understand the full impact Omicron will have in the B.C. context. It is imperative people follow the new orders in how they celebrate this season. However, there are many things we can now do safely with reasonable and prudent measures like wearing a mask, staying home when sick, getting tested and, most importantly, getting fully vaccinated.”

In addition to the provincial health officer orders, British Columbians are advised to limit indoor gatherings to those who are fully vaccinated, to ensure proper ventilation indoors, to avoid all travel if not fully vaccinated and to follow the travel advisory issued by the federal government to avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada.

The updated orders will be enacted under the Public Health Act.

Quick Facts:

- To date, evidence indicates Omicron is more transmissible than other variants of COVID-19; however, there is limited evidence to date on severity of illness.
- B.C. has a vaccination rate of 86.8% for all eligible age groups for a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 82.5% for a second dose.
- The Province announced its full booster dose campaign on Oct. 26, 2021.
- Vaccination remains the most effective protection from severe illness.
 - From Dec. 8-14, people not fully vaccinated accounted for 46.3% of cases in B.C., and from Dec. 1-14, accounted for 70.2% of hospitalizations.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0230-002414>

Mental Health Supports Available

- The provincial government has put together resources on managing COVID-19 stress, [mental health and COVID-19 on HealthLink BC](#) as well as a list of [virtual mental health supports during COVID-19](#).

- Find additional resources to [support mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).
- Learn about resources in your area and find out how to [access mental health and substance use services](#).
- Grief is a normal part of life and natural response to loss and the meaningful connections we have to others in our life. Find more information about  [grief and support services](#) available to you.

Booster Shots

Here is the BC Government information on booster shots:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/booster>

What is a booster shot:

A booster dose is an additional COVID-19 vaccine you may get months after your initial vaccine series to boost protection against infection that may have waned over time. A booster gets immunity back up to a desirable level of protection for an extended period of time.

Why is a booster shot recommended?

The COVID-19 vaccines are very effective and provide good, ongoing protection especially against severe disease – which is the primary goal of the vaccination program. Here in BC, the longer interval between vaccine doses has been very helpful in supporting long lasting [vaccine effectiveness](#).

However, because vaccines are not 100% effective against symptomatic infection, breakthrough infections among fully vaccinated individuals will happen. The vast majority of these are expected to be mild. Hospitalizations for COVID-19 among fully vaccinated individuals are rare.

There is some evidence that the level of protection against symptomatic infection decreases over time after the initial vaccination series, especially for people who got their two COVID-19 vaccines less than 5 weeks apart, those with immunocompromising conditions, and among older individuals.

Additionally, people in long term care and assisted living facilities and in areas of high transmission are at higher risk of COVID-19 infection and will also benefit from a booster dose.

Timing of Booster Shots:

Booster doses will start with those who are at highest risk. From November 2021 to January 2022, people most at risk of getting COVID-19 will be invited to book a booster dose appointment. Everyone else will be invited to book an appointment for a booster dose later, once these groups are vaccinated.

You will be invited to book your appointment approximately 6 to 8 months after your last dose.

Your original vaccine doses continue to provide good protection, especially against severe disease, while you wait to get a booster shot.

Who is eligible for a Booster Shot:

Everyone aged 18 and older who received dose 1 and 2, and who wants a booster, will receive it between 6 to 8 months after dose 2. The highest risk populations will be invited to book their booster first.

November 2021 to January 2022

Seniors 65+ and Indigenous people 18+

- You will be invited to book an appointment to get your booster. Invitations will be sent out by risk, age group (from oldest to youngest based on the year you were born) and the date of your second dose.
- Eligibility: People born in 1956 or earlier (65+) and Indigenous people born in 2003 or earlier (18+)

People receiving care

- You will get a booster from a health care worker who visits you.
- Eligibility: Residents in independent living facilities and people who receive long-term home support

Health care workers

- You will get a booster from your employer or at a clinic.
- Eligibility:
 - All staff working in long-term care and assisted facilities or acute care hospitals.
 - Health authority staff, workers and physicians Community health providers, physicians and staff

Rural and remote Indigenous communities

- You will get a booster dose in your community from your local health authority.
- Eligibility: Staff working in long-term care and assisted residences or acute care hospitals

People who got AstraZeneca

- You will be invited to book an appointment to get your booster if you are registered with the [Get Vaccinated](#) system.
- Eligibility: People who got AstraZeneca for both dose 1 and dose 2

Learn more about booster doses at gov.bc.ca/booster

How to get a booster shot:

You must be registered with the Get Vaccinated provincial registration system and your immunization record must be up-to-date to receive an invitation to book a booster appointment.

[Learn more about booking your appointment.](#)

Website: <https://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/>

Phone: 1-833-838-2323

Ernie Baatz

Executive Director

Spectrum Society for Community Living

Express yourself. Build your network. Find your voice.

www.spectrumsociety.org

cell: 604-644-1474

Be Calm, Be Kind, Be Safe

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