



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

FNHA Zoom Town Hall

Q&A for March 17, 2022

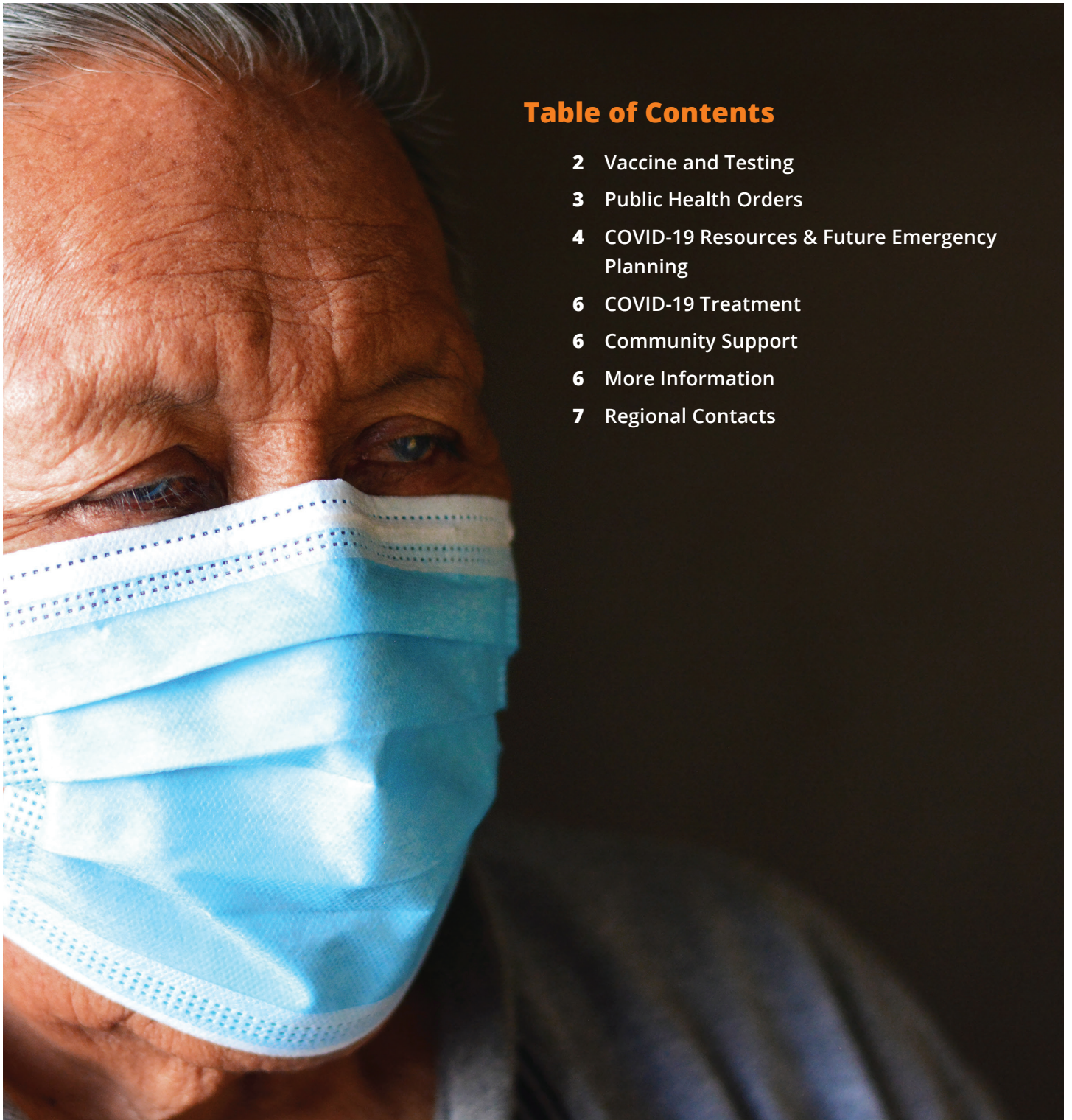


Table of Contents

- 2 Vaccine and Testing
- 3 Public Health Orders
- 4 COVID-19 Resources & Future Emergency Planning
- 6 COVID-19 Treatment
- 6 Community Support
- 6 More Information
- 7 Regional Contacts

Vaccines & Testing

Is there a breakdown of COVID-19 cases for our local area rather than just for the whole province?

There is currently no mechanism to capture health care data on a local level related to COVID-19 case counts.

COVID-19 is not going away. What it will be like going forward is unknown and will depend on “community immunity” either from having COVID-19 and recovering or being vaccinated. We are unsure what the impact of any new variants might be. Although we are seeing outbreaks in other parts of the world, we are not seeing that here. We are, however, monitoring that.

Can another person report positive Rapid Antigen Tests on behalf of community members who test positive but do not self-report?

Reporting positive cases in BC is no longer required. However, if the community has the capacity to record the data it may be of assistance for the health authority when addressing COVID-19 clusters or outbreaks.

Will booster shots/doses be required each year (like the flu shots)?

A fourth dose (second booster) was [announced on April 5 by the provincial government](#), recommended for Indigenous people aged 55 and older living in long-term care facilities and assisted living. The vaccine will be offered to people who are between four and six months since their booster shot, beginning with older people and those who are considered extremely clinically vulnerable.

Has there been any studies or reports on the adverse effects of vaccines?

Both the province and the federal government record and track adverse events following vaccination. Please read more about this at these links:

- BC Centre for Disease Control: [Adverse Events Following Immunization](#) (Webpage)
- Public Health Agency of Canada: [Report of Adverse Events Following Immunization](#) (PDF)

Are Rapid Antigen Tests available to all First Nations?

Rapid antigen tests are available for free to all British Columbians—regardless of ethnicity—aged 18 and over. Follow the link below to identify pharmacies near you that are distributing the tests.

- Province of British Columbia: [Rapid antigen testing](#) (Webpage)

Will First Nations communities receive the Novavax vaccine?

Novavax is not an mRNA vaccine and so a limited supply will be available in BC sometime in April and availability will depend on requests. Currently, you can register for a Novavax dose through the provincial Get Vaccinated system here:

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

There is no plan for communities to receive the Novavax vaccine, however you may speak to your health centre to ask about arrangements to have it administered on an individual basis in community.

What is the plan for Rapid Antigen Test distribution?

We have an excess of Rapid Antigen Tests in the province, however with lower case counts we are not seeing the need for distribution on the levels we were seeing earlier this year or last fall. If your community requires more test kits please reach out to your health centre to connect with the FNHA for distribution.

Public Health Orders

When will the mask mandate end for community health centres? Is it necessary to wear masks all day or only when clients are present?

It is strongly recommended in any health facility, including long-term care, that staff and visitors are masked. We know that the Omicron variant can live on surfaces longer than earlier COVID-19 variants. The chances of an individual carrying a COVID-19 infection or being vulnerable to infection increases in health facilities. For that reason it is strongly recommended to continue wearing masks. This is consistent with the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer.

In administrative areas where patients do not visit, health care workers may choose not to wear a mask on a discretionary basis.

What restrictions does FNHA recommended in schools?

Restrictions in school have been reduced and children are now able to go to school without being required to mask. However, children can still wear a mask as directed by their parents if they're young, or by choice if they're older.

Individual communities who have First Nations schools can work with a policy (not orders) for local circumstances. So if leaders come together and make a policy for masking within school, communities have self-determination to enforce that policy. This would be a community decision and community enforcement would be required.

For the last year and a bit we've been asking everyone for proof of vaccine. What will happen now for in-person programs with people who are unvaccinated?

The provincial requirement to provide proof of vaccination to access non-essential services or settings is scheduled to end April 8. Communities can continue to enforce a proof of vaccination program on their own. That will be up to the community to make that decision.

With travel rules changing, borders reopening and the requirements of COVID-19 tests being dropped, there are concerns about travelers in our communities. How will BC's communities be consulted and what is FNHA's stance on this new decision?

The opening of borders and the requirement of testing has been a discussion on a national level with conflicting voices, particularly from border communities. If COVID-19 cases start rising again, we anticipate there could be a shut down again.

Communities still have the power to create checkpoints and require Rapid Antigen Tests prior to entering. This may not be feasible in larger cities but it is possible in community. The FNHA and other health authorities have discussed plans surrounding rising COVID-19 cases and how quickly we could re-implement public health orders if necessary.

One of the technologies being used to detect COVID-19 is testing wastewater. Are First Nations using this technology as well?

Depending on the community's wastewater system, it can be used (not useful for communities with cisterns and septic tanks), but in larger urban settings we can test easily for the presence of viral particles because of larger populations. It's more challenging in smaller communities but can be useful in communities with common wastewater systems and larger populations.

COVID-19 Resources & Future Emergency Planning

Will isolation supports be given to those who are sick but tested negative?

Isolation support is only available for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 on a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test. We encourage people who test negative on an initial test to test again after 48 hours.

What is the reimbursement deadline for meal support for COVID-19?

For self-isolation dates between Jan. 12 and Sept. 30, 2021 submissions will be accepted until April 15, 2022. For self-isolation dates between Oct. 1, 2021 and Jun. 30, 2022 submissions will be accepted until Jul. 15, 2022.

- [Community Support Guide](#), March 14, 2022

Are benefits available for long-COVID-19 patients?

There is a lot of discussion around Persistent Post-COVID-19 Symptoms, often called "long-COVID-19." Getting a diagnosis, treatment and follow up have been challenging, particularly in remote and isolated communities. At this time, depending on the circumstance, people can apply for a disability benefit through Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan.

The FNHA does not currently have funding supports for people with long-COVID-19, however, are reviewing this currently.

Are there clinics that work with individuals what have serious long-term effects from COVID-19?

There are treatment clinics run by Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health, with most clinics located in the Lower Mainland. There is another long-COVID-19 clinic based at Royal Jubilee Hospital on Vancouver Island.

Long-COVID-19 patients with persistent symptoms for greater than three months can be referred to these clinics. Virtual appointments can be made via telehealth for those who are not able to visit in person.

- Provincial Health Services Authority: [Living with Persistent Post-COVID-19 Symptoms](#) (webpage)

Are there mental health counselling supports available for those living in urban settings?

Yes, there are mental health counselling supports available for those living in urban settings. Please contact our Health Benefits program at 1-855-550-5454 or email healthbenefits@fnha.ca

There is a shadow pandemic due to COVID-19 with higher rates of domestic abuse and toxic drug supply. Will these issues be addressed as part of recovery from COVID-19?

One of the principles in recovery is integrating our response to the toxic drug crisis, the Indian Residential Schools findings, and emergency health management to underpin our COVID-19 planning and response. This is the intent behind the FNHA Board's approval of a public health response structure, so that we can support communities to integrate all the supports needed.

There is an opportunity for discussion around domestic violence and other healing approaches over the next year. We have had presentations on healing from trauma and we will be working with our Regional teams to understand what models would look like for a regional response around this issue. We will look to have comprehensive conversations around victims of trauma, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and other issues of importance.

We will be sharing updated information surrounding the toxic drug crisis at our Regional Caucuses. We welcome input from communities about what kinds of solutions people want us to work on. We are working with our provincial and federal partners on increasing access to a safe supply of non-toxic drugs and decriminalization of small amounts of drugs for personal use because of the risk of incarceration.

We have been working to develop more treatment facilities and on-the-land treatment closer to home.

What is the emergency plan going to look like for the next few years?

We will evaluate what we have done and we can respond to another wave if necessary. We meet regularly with provincial and federal public health leadership and we are seeing that cases, hospitalizations and deaths are all decreasing.

We have also educated people about communicable diseases. We have to share with people that there is still risk out there and there will always be risk, but that risk can be managed with proper planning and vaccination.

The planning at the community level is important and communities have to determine which plans have to be implemented based on the needs of the community (i.e. one person tests positive for COVID-19, or a full household tests positive COVID-19). These planning conversations need to happen now and we need to outline the indicators/conditions under which we ramp up an emergency response again.

We do have funding available to develop and/or update community communicable disease emergency response plans and we have staff to support these conversations and implement the plans.

- [Communicable Disease Emergency Response Planning](#), FNHA webpage

Will there be additional funding/resources to support families whose loved one travelled for medical treatment for COVID-19 and died so they're able to transfer the body back to community?

In the past, the Band council/administration or clan system has supported families and the FNHA has not been involved. The FNHA Board can discuss this issue at a future date but we currently do not have supports available. We have joint tables with Indigenous Services Canada regionally and federally so we can bring that conversation to them as well.

COVID-19 Treatment

Does the FNHA have access to COVID-19 treatments?

Our teams are working both centrally and regionally to ensure access to Paxlovid and Sotrovimab is available, so long as the client is well suited to the treatment, meets the criteria and the prescription is made by a physician. The medications have been made available in remote communities and through regional health authority facilities.

It is important to note that medical treatments such as Paxlovid and Sotrovimab do not prevent infection and are not considered a replacement for vaccine. They are only effective when taken early after COVID-19 infection and do not prevent possible future infections. Only some patients may benefit from these treatments as determined by your primary care provider.

- [I Have COVID-19, Approved COVID-19 Treatments in BC](#) (FNHA webpage)

Community Support

1. For Communicable Disease Emergency Response Planning support, please feel free to contact FNHA's Communicable Disease Emergency Response Planning Team at cdmgmt@fnha.ca
2. If your community would like support and consultation with strategies and measures (i.e., workflow, cleaning and disinfection, furnishings, infrastructure, etc.) in preventing the spread of communicable diseases in your healthcare and public facilities please feel free to contact FNHA Infection Prevention and Control Program at ipc@fnha.ca
3. "How to Use the BTNX At-Home Rapid Antigen Test" YouTube video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyucYcmXSXw>
4. "How to Use the Artron At-Home Test" YouTube video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wjWR6EO0M4>

More Information

The following health wellness and cultural supports are available:

- Tsow-Tun-Le-Lum (cultural support and counselling): 1-888-403-3123
- Indian Residential School Survivors Society: 1-800-721-0066 or 604-985-4464
- KUU-US Crisis Line Society: Adults and Elders at 250-723-4050; Children and Youth at 250-723-2040; Toll-free at 1-800-588-8717

A comprehensive list of resources can be found at FNHA.ca:

- Webpage: [FNHA COVID-19 testing](#)
- Webpage: [FNHA COVID-19 rapid testing](#)
- Resource: [Fact sheet for individuals on at-home rapid tests](#) (PDF)
- Resource: [COVID-19 Mental Health and Cultural Supports](#) (PDF)
- Webpage: [COVID-19 community leaders page](#)

For more information on COVID-19 prevention and response, please visit fnha.ca/coronavirus

Regional Contacts

Vancouver Island

- Vaccine Clinics: Ashley.Marshall@fnha.ca and Hanna.Scrivens@fnha.ca and Anna.Chong@islandhealth.com
- Rapid Testing: Ashley.Marshall@fnha.ca and Francine.Gascoyne@fnha.ca
- Deliveries of tests: Reanna.August@fnha.ca

Northern Region

- For all COVID-19 related supports (Vaccine Community Clinics, Community Based and Rapid At-Home Testing, PPE, etc.) please contact: NorthernHealthEmergency@FNHA.ca

Vancouver Coastal

- Vaccine Community Clinics Leads: Brent.Tom@fnha.ca; Riley.David@fnha.ca; Tatiana.Ticono@fnha.ca
- Rapid Antigen Testing inquiries: Melissa.Towes@fnha.ca
- Clinical Leads/Education and Training: Sheila.Paquette@fnha.ca; Leona.Smith@fnha.ca
- PPE Inquiries: Shailen.Tom@fnha.ca
- MH&W Inquiries: Riley.David@fnha.ca
- Health Emergency Management Inquiries: Brent.Tom@fnha.ca

Interior Region

- Casey Neathway, Manager of Environmental Public Health Services: Casey.Neathway@fnha.ca

Fraser Region

- Vaccine Community Clinics Leads: Sam.Noizadan@fnha.ca
- Rapid Antigen Testing inquiries: Lindsey.McCuaig@fnha.ca
- Clinical Leads/Education and Training: Tara.Langlois-Young@fnha.ca
- PPE Inquiries: Lindsey.McCuaig@fnha.ca
- MH&W Inquiries: Sierra.Kortenbach@fnha.ca