



COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE



December 22, 2020

To: Contracted Long Term Care Facilities
From: Dr. Albert de Villiers, Chief Medical Health Officer
Karen Bloemink, VP Pandemic Response and Surgical Strategy

Re: Interior Health Launches COVID-19 Immunization Program

We are pleased to announce a milestone in Interior Health (IH) this week: today marks the first day of IH's COVID-19 immunization program, a province-wide campaign that will continue in the weeks and months ahead.

While our initial clinics are focused on select staff and physicians, across IH we can all recognize and celebrate the significance of this milestone. COVID-19 vaccines are a welcome and important step forward in our response to the pandemic.

In British Columbia, the first doses of the vaccine are being made available to staff and physicians in long-term care. As more vaccine arrives each week, we look forward to quickly widening the network of IH communities offering COVID-19 vaccine clinics to staff.

Long-term care staff and physicians eligible to receive the vaccine this week will have received a separate, direct communication Monday, Dec. 21, 2020, from their site leader.

Question & Answers

Q. Why is the vaccine only available this week to a small group of staff?

A. A limited quantity of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been received in B.C. and delivered to the health authorities for distribution to staff and physicians working in long-term care. Distribution is being limited this week to staff working at specific sites in order to ensure smooth, efficient and effective immunization clinics.

Q. When will the vaccine be available to staff and physicians at other long-term care sites, and staff working in intensive care, emergency departments and hospital units where COVID-19 patients receive care?

A. Vaccines are being delivered weekly to all health authorities in B.C. Expected timelines depend on vaccine approval and availability. As more vaccine is available, clinics will be added across our region.

We are making plans now to be able to expand clinics in communities throughout IH and as information is confirmed, it will be shared.

Q. Where can I learn about vaccine eligibility, distribution and B.C.'s COVID-19 immunization program?

A. British Columbia is working with federal, provincial, and health authority partners to plan the COVID-19 immunization program. For more information visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>

Q. When will the vaccine be available to individuals in care (long-term care, hospitals) and other priority populations?

A. It is anticipated that vaccine will be available to priority populations in the first months of 2021. Following that, a second phase of immunizations will begin in the spring. More information on the provincial timelines and priority populations can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/vaccines>

Q. Where can I learn more about the Health Canada process that approved vaccines for distribution?

A. For more information about the Pfizer and other types of vaccines Health Canada is reviewing visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines.html>