

Office of the Seniors Advocate Monthly Update - April 2021

COVID -19 Vaccination Update

Effective April 6th, the province has released its online booking system <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/getvaccinated.html> in concert with a provincial phone line: 1-833-838-2323. People age 71 and older can register for a vaccination appointment, mass clinics are underway, 893,590 people had their first vaccination dose, and of this group, 87,472 had their second dose.

Find out who gets vaccinated next, how we are doing so far, new developments, what seniors need to know, and how we are doing compared to the rest of Canada.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newsletter/nl0421-vaccine-update/>

COVID-19 Update

Rising COVID case levels, variants of concern, increased transmission and growth in more severe cases were cited as concerns by Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, when new and amended provincial health orders were introduced. Effective March 30th, the new orders are intended to be a three-week circuit breaker to bend the curve and protect people. They will be in place until April 19th.

[Click here to learn about new restrictions, COVID Cases in B.C., including long-term care, and what is happening across Canada.](#)

<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newletter/nl2104-covid-19-update/>

Visitor Restrictions Reduced

After more than a year of staying apart to stay safe, visitor restrictions to long-term care have been reduced. This month, seniors will be reunited with their

loved ones, as more family members are allowed to visit them in the privacy of residents' rooms.

[Click here to learn more about visits to long-term care and assisted living.](https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newsletter/nl2104-visitor-restrictions-reduced/)

<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newsletter/nl2104-visitor-restrictions-reduced/>

Changes to B.C. Low-income Seniors Supplement

The B.C. Low-income Seniors Supplement increased and almost doubled. Effective April 1st, the supplement now has a maximum of \$99.30 per month.

[Click here to learn more.](https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newsletter/nl2104-bc-seniors-supplement-increased/)

<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newsletter/nl2104-bc-seniors-supplement-increased/>

BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations

Adapting homes in small ways can help seniors stay safe and independent. Simple upgrades such as installing handrails and bathtub grab bars can help prevent falls and related injuries. The BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations program (formerly called the Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI) program) is a grant program for low-income and moderate-income seniors. Successful applicants can get up to \$17,500 in rebates towards adaptations that directly address an individual's permanent disability or loss of ability and improve their ability to perform the basic activities of daily living. Home adaptations include exterior and interior ramps and door widening to accommodate a wheelchair, and bathroom modifications, such as grab bars, shower seats and handheld showerheads.

[Click here to learn more.](http://bit.ly/3cRAWGW)

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Tax Tip #1 File by April 30, 2021

Filing your taxes by April 30, 2021, may not seem like much of a tax tip, but it can save you money, so can applying for tax credits, including the disability tax credit, B.C. Home Renovation Tax Credit for Seniors and the Persons with Disabilities tax

credit. Another way you may be able to save money on taxes is by splitting pension income between spouses or common-law partners.

[Click here to learn more about ways you may be able to reduce your taxes.](#)

<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newsletter/nl202104-tax-tips/>

Changes to B.C. homeowner grant application process

The B.C. homeowner grant, which must be applied for each year, helps homeowners reduce the amount of property taxes they pay for their principal residence. Starting in 2021, residents in municipalities can no longer apply for the homeowner grant through their municipal office. Now, everyone must apply directly to the province using a new online system, or by calling 1-888-355-2700 for assistance. Applicants will need their social insurance number to verify their eligibility.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/property-taxes/annual-property-tax/home-owner-grant/senior>

Defer Your Property Taxes

The Property Tax Deferment Program is a low-interest loan program that helps B.C. seniors pay annual property taxes on their principal residence. Applications will be accepted in May 2021.

[Click here to learn more about the Property Tax Deferment Program.](#)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/property-taxes/annual-property-tax/defer-taxes>

Recent Announcements From the B.C. Government

Impacting Seniors

Click on the highlighted links below to learn more about each news item.

March 31, 2021

New urgent and primary care centre opens in Penticton

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0060-000592>

March 31, 2021

Collaboration key to community co-operative's success

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021SDPR0029-000593>

March 29, 2021

Canada, B.C. invest in public transit infrastructure in Greater Victoria

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021TRAN0048-000587>

March 29, 2021

BC Bus North service continues with federal, provincial support

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021TRAN0045-000576>

March 26, 2021

Major connectivity investments for coastal communities

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021CITZ0022-000562>

March 25, 2021

Changes to long-term care visitation on the way

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0022-000551>

March 25, 2021

Province hikes fines to further enforce COVID-19 public safety

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021PSSG0031-000540>

March 25, 2021

First intake of First Nations Well Being Fund open

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021SDPR0026-000544>

March 24, 2021

Pharmacists strengthen team-based primary care team

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0057-000537>

March 23, 2021

People deemed clinically extremely vulnerable prioritized for COVID-19 vaccine

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0022-000532>

March 19, 2021

Next step taken for new Stuart Lake Hospital

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0054-000512>

March 19, 2021

B.C. continues to advance surgical renewal achievement

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0055-000513>

March 18, 2021

Seniors, people with disabilities to benefit from improved home adaptation program

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021AG0033-000497>

March 17, 2021

Community response networks reach vulnerable adults

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021SDPR0021-000495>

March 16, 2021

Permanent increase to assistance rates helps people in need

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021SDPR0024-000483>

March 12, 2021

New Richmond UPCC to provide health care closer to home

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021PREM0020-000459>

March 9, 2021

Urgent and primary care centre coming soon to Penticton

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0020-000427>

March 9, 2021

Province keeps B.C. moving: funding inter-city bus service, regional airports

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021PREM0019-000422>

March 8, 2021

Construction begins for new St. Paul's Hospital

<https://thenewstpauls.ca/construction-begins-for-new-st-pauls-hospital/>

National News

Government of Canada funds more than 3,000 projects across Canada to support seniors

[Click here to learn more.](#)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2021/03/government-of-canada-funds-more-than-3000-projects-across-canada-to-support-seniors.html>

Recent Research

Rising to the Challenge: How BC's Community-Based Seniors' Service Agencies Stepped Up During COVID-19

Commissioned by the United Way's Healthy Aging Office in partnership with the Community Based Seniors Services Leadership Council, the study was undertaken by Dialogues in Action who gathered data to measure the effectiveness and responsiveness of the province-wide, community-led response to support seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report highlights how a network of community agencies across the province pulled together to keep older adults safe at home.

Click here to read the study.

<https://www.uwlm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Rising-to-the-Challenge-Full-Report.pdf>

B.C. study questions time between COVID-19 vaccination doses for older adults -

Weak humoral immune reactivity among residents of long-term care facilities following one dose of the BNT162b2 mRNA COVID-19 vaccine

A B.C. study funded by the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force, raises questions about delaying second vaccine doses in older adults. The study found a weaker immune response, to the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines, in long-term care residents than younger adults.

Click here to read the article.

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.03.17.21253773v1>

COVID myth spreaders not who you might think, new OMA research shows

Almost six per cent of Ontarians online are spreading misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic, and the vast majority of them are older men and women, according to exclusive new research conducted on behalf of the Ontario Medical Association. Ontarians ages 55-64 are the most engaged online across all COVID hoax topics, with men (52 per cent) and women (48 per cent) almost equally involved. While men who engage in spreading misinformation online tend to talk about government using COVID to further its own interests, women who do so are focused on variants and government as the source of COVID-19 and why the vaccine is to be feared. Both men and women ages 55-64 believe in the misinformation they are sharing and are not on social media to dispel the myths.

Click here to read the news release and research summary

<https://www.oma.org/uploadedfiles/oma/media/public/covid-myths-asi-research-summary-for-oma.pdf>

The Impact of COVID-19 on Long-Term Care in Canada Focus on the First 6 Months

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) released a report about how COVID-19 has affected long-term care in Canada. The publication has detailed information about the first 6 months of the pandemic, including how homes, residents and staff were affected, and how resident care changed. The report also

provides early comparisons of COVID-19 cases and deaths in Wave 1 and Wave 2 across the country.

Click here to read the report.

<https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/impact-covid-19-long-term-care-canada-first-6-months-report-en.pdf>

Predictors of infection, symptoms development, and mortality in people with SARS-CoV-2 living in retirement nursing homes

Since the start of the pandemic, millions of people have been infected, with thousands of deaths. Many variables worldwide have been identified in retirement nursing homes, with a high number of deaths. This study aims were to evaluate the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the retirement nursing homes, the predictors to develop symptoms, and death.

Click here to read article.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33724987/>

Nursing Home Characteristics Associated With Resident COVID-19 Morbidity in Communities With High Infection Rates

This cross-sectional study uses data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Nursing Home COVID-19 Public File to assess the characteristics associated with resident morbidity among 3008 nursing homes in US communities with the highest COVID-19 infection prevalence.

Click here to read article:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33724388/>

Second versus first wave of COVID-19 deaths: Shifts in age distribution and in nursing home fatalities

This study examined whether the age distribution of COVID-19 deaths and the share of deaths in nursing homes changed in the second versus the first pandemic wave.

Click here to read the article.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33581086/>

Improving the Fate of Nursing Homes During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Need for Policy

Click here to read article:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33507802/>

Developing a clinical screening tool for identifying COVID-19 infection in older people dwelling in residential aged care services

This study was to develop and conduct preliminary feasibility testing of a clinical screening instrument for early identification of COVID-19 infection in older people residing in residential aged care services (RACS).

Click here to read study:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33185979/>

Nursing Home Social Workers Perceptions of Preparedness and Coping for COVID-19

Social work has a long history of responding to the needs of vulnerable populations during times of crisis and disaster. Social workers are working at the front lines responding to the current COVID-19 pandemic in a variety of health care practice settings, including nursing homes; however, it is unclear how social workers perceive their preparedness during this time.

Click here to read article:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32861215/>

Thrust Into the Spotlight: COVID-19 Focuses Media Attention on Nursing Homes

This study sheds light on the agenda-setting role of the media during the COVID-19 crisis by examining trends in nursing home (NH) coverage in 4 leading national newspapers-The New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, and Los Angeles Times.

Click here to read study:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32696957/>

Recent advances in understanding and treatment of Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's disease is increasingly recognized to be a multifactorial disease with a strong genetic component. The death of vulnerable neuronal populations appears to drive the neurodegeneration underlying Parkinson's disease. The improved understanding of underlying mechanisms has led to the development of novel therapeutic approaches in Parkinson's disease. Until these treatments are fully developed and approved, clinicians must rely on therapies designed to improve quality of life of patients by treating various motor and non-motor symptoms of the disease.

[Click here to read the article.](#)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7886054/pdf/facrev-09-06.pdf>

Impact of Poor Oral Health on Community-Dwelling Seniors: A Scoping Review.

This review presents health-related impacts of poor oral health among community-dwelling seniors. Improving access to oral healthcare services for seniors can help not only reduce the burden of oral diseases in this population group but also address the morbidity and mortality associated with other general health diseases and conditions caused due to poor oral health. Findings from this study can help identify shortcomings in existing oral healthcare programs for seniors and develop future programs and services to improve access and utilization of oral care services by seniors.

[Click here to read the article:](#)

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7841244/pdf/10.1177_1178632921989734.pdf

Volunteer Impact on Health-Related Outcomes for Seniors: a Systematic Review And Meta-Analysis

This systematic review and meta-analysis evaluates the effects of unpaid volunteer interventions on health-related outcomes for seniors. Volunteers may increase physical activity levels and subjective ratings of physical function for seniors without apparent harm. These findings support the WHO call to action on evidence-based policies to align health systems in support of older adults.

[Click here to read the article.](#)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7904324/pdf/cgj-24-44.pdf>

Virtual care for patients with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias during the COVID-19 era and beyond

Virtual care has the potential to improve access to health care for people with Alzheimer disease and related dementias, especially in the context of the coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic. Evidence regarding direct-to-home virtual care for people with Alzheimer disease and related dementias is lacking; this model is associated with unique challenges that must be considered as virtual care becomes a more common approach to health care delivery.

[Click here to read the article.](#)

<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/193/11/E371.full.pdf>

Outreach by the OSA

The Seniors Advocate continues to meet with seniors across the province by attending events and delivering presentations virtually.

Click here to see Events <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/events/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/SeniorsAdvocateBC/>

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