

Northern BC Healthy K to 12 Schools Newsletter

ISSUE 1 | WINTER 2022



**Information for Northern BC schools,
students, and families**



northern health
the northern way of caring

IN THIS ISSUE

FOR ALL SCHOOLS



03 **QR codes**

Follow the steps to access online resources using your mobile device's camera app.



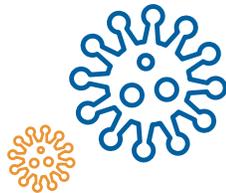
04 **Services to schools**

See at-a-glance the types of services available in schools. Refer to the important contact info.



05 **Child and youth mental health**

Review the new local resource guide for families.



06 **COVID-19 and schools**

Read a welcome letter from Northern Health (NH) medical health officers (MHOs). Wondering about key resources about COVID-19 for schools? Look no further.



07 **Influenza**

Get your flu shot. Find a Flu Clinic near you.



12 **Extra NH webpages**

Have more questions about child and youth health topics? Check out these various NH webpages with QR codes on the back page.

FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



10 Feelings First

Learn why Feelings First is important for social and emotional development in young children.



10 Winter sun safety

Protect your family from the sun's rays year-round, even in the winter.



10 Be a SunSense certified school

Learn about the national launch of the SunSense program to support schools in sun safety and skin cancer prevention.

FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS



11 Cannabis and vapour

Watch two new videos to help you and your youth get the facts and know the risks.



11 Free menstrual products

Access to free menstrual products creates a better learning environment free of stigma and barriers for students.



11 Free condoms for secondary schools

All Northern BC secondary and alternative schools should have free condoms available that are easy to access.



11 My guide | concussion (Teen edition)

Create a personalized guide to help your child manage their specific concussion symptoms.

USING QR CODES

In this newsletter, we use QR codes for various websites and resources. Here are steps to help you:



- **Step 1:** Open the camera app from your mobile device (either on the home screen, control centre, or lock screen).
- **Step 2:** Hold your device so the QR code opens in the viewfinder and wait until you see a notification pop up with a link.
- **Step 3:** Click on the notification to open the link associated with the QR code.

FOR ALL SCHOOLS

Services to schools

- Healthy schools help to protect the health and safety of our children and youth in the North.
- For an overview of the current NH services that are available to schools, visit [NH School and Youth Health](#) public webpage.
- At a glance, the types of services offered in schools include:
 - Communicable disease and immunizations
 - Dental, hearing (audiology), and vision screening
 - Environmental health
 - Nursing services, health education and promotion for injury prevention, nutrition, physical activity, sexual and reproductive health, tobacco, cannabis, and vapour reduction
 - Support for children with potentially life-threatening medical conditions
 - Support for mental health and substance use, including access to harm reduction supplies
- Note: Some services may vary from community to community and school to school. Services usually offered by NH may also be impacted by COVID-19.



Important contact information



- If you need to speak with a health care provider:
 - Call your family doctor or nurse practitioner
 - Contact the [NH Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic](#) at 1-844-645-7811
 - Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1
- If you need to connect with a member of a health care team in your community, connect with your [local health unit](#) (scan the QR code).



- Connect with the [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day](#) program
- If you have questions about NH services offered in schools, email HealthySchools@northernhealth.ca



Child and youth mental health



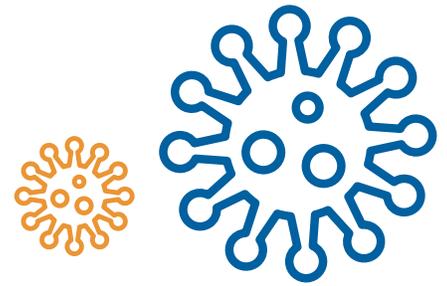
- Mental health includes our feelings, emotions, thoughts, and mood. It impacts how we cope with challenges and stress.
- If you or your child/youth are struggling with your mental health, support is available.
- Learn more about local resources in Northern Health:



- Fulsome guide: [Child and youth mental health and substance use resource guide for families](#) (20 pages)
- Quick guide: [Child and youth mental health and substance use resources for families](#) (1 page double sided)



COVID-19 AND SCHOOLS



A message from the NH MHOs:

As we welcome this New Year, we thank everyone connected to the school community for doing your part to reduce the transmission (spread) of COVID-19.

We all have a role to play in getting through this pandemic. Together, we can create safe school environments that keep schools the safest place they can be for as many students as possible.

Northern Health is working closely with School Districts to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools across Northern BC. The cases of COVID-19 we are seeing in the schools are a reflection of COVID-19 cases in the community. It's important to remember that schools have communicable disease (safety) plans in place and we need you all to follow them.

The best way to protect yourself, your children (if eligible), and your communities is to get vaccinated and follow public health guidance and orders. Vaccines are safe and the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19. Wear your mask. All school staff, visitors over the age of five, volunteers, and students from kindergarten to grade 12 should wear a mask at all times while indoors at school.

Remember:



- Check yourself and your child every day for COVID-19 symptoms and use the [BC K to 12 Health Check](#) app to help you decide whether you should attend school.
- Stay home from school if you are sick.
- Refer to the [NH COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation](#) webpage for information about what to do if you or your child tests positive for COVID-19.



See the [Key Resources about COVID-19 and Schools](#) (page 8-9) for more guidance. Thank you all for your support. We look forward to continue working together to ensure a safe and healthy school year.

Yours truly,

Dr. Jong Kim, MD MSc
FRCPC
Chief Medical Health Officer
Northern Health

Dr. Rakel Kling, MD
MSc MPH FRCPC
Medical Health Officer
Northern Interior
Northern Health

Dr. Raina Fumerton, MD
MPH FRCPC
Medical Health Officer,
Northwest and A/Northeast
Northern Health

Dr. Trevor Corneil, MD
FRCPC
Medical Health Officer
Northern Health

Here are some additional important public health messages for schools and families. Explore the resources below. Talk about them with your children.

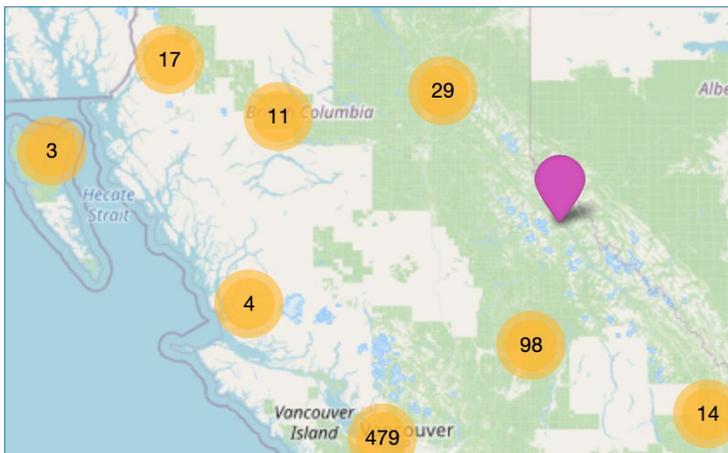
NORTHERN RAPID RESPONSE TEAM

In BC, six regional COVID-19 rapid response teams have been created to support schools and education partners during the pandemic.

- The Northern region rapid response team is made of members from education and public health. The team liaises with Northern Health, the Ministry of Education, and School Districts in the North, and works to develop, implement, and review school pandemic recovery and communicable disease plans. The team offers recommendations and support with these school plans when needed.
- The team will be in place until March 2022 with a possible extension to the end of June 2022.

INFLUENZA

Get your flu vaccine. This year the flu vaccination is free for everyone in BC six-months-old and older. It's important for everyone in BC to get vaccinated against flu to protect themselves and their loved ones from serious illness.



- Use the flu clinic locator [Find a Flu Clinic | Immunize BC](#) to find an flu vaccine clinic near you.



- To find a pharmacy offering the flu vaccine near you, please visit this link [2021 Flu Vaccines in B.C. pharmacies | BC Pharmacy Association](#). You may be able to book your flu vaccine online or by phone. Some pharmacies are accepting walk-ins.

- Influenza (ImmunizeBC) [Influenza | ImmunizeBC](#)



KEY RESOURCES ABOUT COVID-19 AND SCHOOLS

It can be hard to find reliable information on COVID-19 and immunization. Below are key resources for families and schools. Scan the QR codes to visit the different websites.



[NH COVID-19 School Information](#) public webpage
Learn more about how to create safe K to 12 school environments.

[COVID-19](#) (ImmunizeBC)
This is a public website and has trustworthy information on vaccination, including a FAQ section.



[COVID-19 Vaccine](#) (BCCDC)
Learn about the COVID-19 immunization program in NH, BC, and Canada.

[K-12 Schools and COVID-19: Parents and Students](#) (BCCDC)
A helpful resource to help prevent COVID-19 in schools.



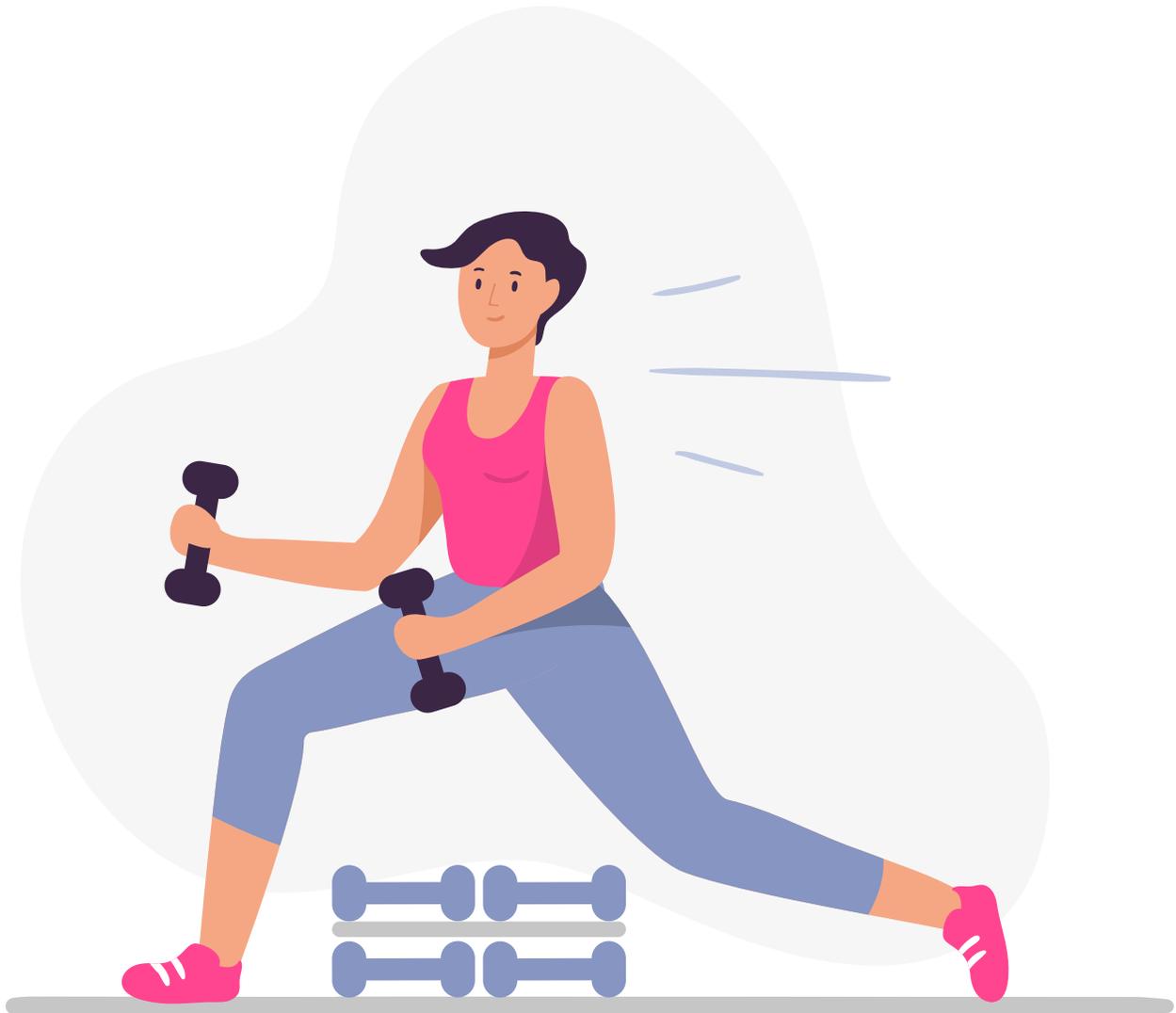
[COVID-19 Immunization Clinics](#) (Northern Health)
Includes information for how to register and book an appointment. Immunizations are the best way to help keep kids, the people around them, and their schools safe and protected from COVID-19. Any child between the ages of 5 and 17 can receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Book your child's immunization appointment.

[NH Staying active during COVID-19 public webpage](#)

Staying active assists in the fight against COVID-19 by:



- Supporting our mental health
- Boosting our immune system
- Helping us sleep
- Helping us cope and relieve stress



FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Feelings First



- In the early years, your child’s social and emotional health is every bit as important as their physical health.
- It affects how they express emotions, deal with stress, develop friendships, and helps to determine their connections to the world around them.
- Keep an eye out for these cute clay creatures and learn about how to put your child’s Feelings First in this story: [Feelings First: Social and emotional development starts early.](#)



WINTER SUN SAFETY

Content adapted from Canadian Cancer Society



- Getting outdoors and being active is great for our bodies, minds, and souls!
- When heading outside, we wear multiple layers to protect from windburn and frostbite, but we often forget to protect ourselves from the winter sun (which is just as dangerous as the summer sun).
- No matter what outdoor activity you engage in, it’s important to protect your family from the sun’s rays during the winter months.



Be a SunSense certified school

- Calling all Northern BC elementary schools, including Parent Advisory Committees (PACs)!
- The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) invites you to become a SunSense Certified School.
- SunSense supports elementary schools to create sun safe environments that protect students and staff from harmful ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun.
- Visit [sunsense.ca](https://www.sunsense.ca) to learn more about free tools and resources for teachers and students. Register today!



FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Cannabis and vaping: get the facts, know the risks



- Increase your family's knowledge, understanding, and awareness of the risks of cannabis vaping.
- Watch the new educational videos on cannabis and vaping from the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction.

1. [Are there risks to vaping cannabis?](#)

This video highlights the different mental and physical risks that are associated with vaping cannabis (1:20 mins).



2. [How to reduce the risks of cannabis vaping](#)

By watching this video, youth will learn how to lower the risks associated with vaping cannabis (1:08 mins).



Free menstrual products



- All BC public schools are required to provide free menstrual products (e.g., pads, tampons) for students in school washrooms, under a government order from 2019.
- This order is part of TogetherBC, the Province's first Poverty Reduction Strategy, to normalize and ensure equitable access for menstrual products.
- Having this access helps to create a better learning environment for students where there is no stigma or barriers.

Free condoms for secondary schools



- Students who are sexually active are encouraged to get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Contact your local health unit for support.
- Free condoms and lubricant are available to all Northern BC secondary and alternative schools to support contraceptive education, sexually transmitted infection prevention, and pregnancy prevention.
- They should be stored in easy-to-access locations such as school health clinics, nurses' offices, and bathrooms.
- Schools can learn how to access these products from their local health unit by reaching out to a primary care nurse in your community.

For my guide | concussion (teen edition)



- GF Strong Adolescent Complex Concussion Clinic has just released a customizable concussion guide specific for teenagers and their caregivers.
- Families can create a personalized guide to help their child manage their specific concussion symptoms.
- To learn more, visit the interactive [Teen Concussion](#) website hosted by Vancouver Coastal Health



LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Explore these K-12 school-related NH webpages:

[Active schools](#)



[Healthy eating at school](#)



[Active school travel](#)



[Children and road safety](#)



#healthynorth

northernhealth.ca

HealthySchools@northernhealth.ca

10-420-6127 (01/22)



northern health
the northern way of caring