

# MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS UPDATE

**December 16, 2019**

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<https://>

[www.interiorhealth.ca/AboutUs/Leadership/MHO/Pages/MHOUpdates.aspx](https://www.interiorhealth.ca/AboutUs/Leadership/MHO/Pages/MHOUpdates.aspx)

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## Drinking Water for Everyone

Access to clean, safe, and reliable drinking water is important for the wellbeing of all the communities Interior Health serves. This information is particularly relevant for **immunocompromised** persons who may need to consider alternate water sources when water quality advisories are in effect.

Accordingly, we are encouraging you to direct patients to [www.DrinkingWaterforEveryone.ca](http://www.DrinkingWaterforEveryone.ca).

[www.DrinkingWaterforEveryone.ca](http://www.DrinkingWaterforEveryone.ca) features a real-time, interactive drinking water advisory map that enables people to search the entire Interior Health region for current drinking water advisories. Other resources on the site include educational videos that provide information on how water systems work and how water is treated.

Created after close consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and careful study of the region's drinking water systems, this resource is easy-to-use and provides important public information. By viewing the map and typing in their community's name, everyone can get to know what's happening with their water.

## Requirements of British Columbia's New Vaccine Status Reporting Regulation

B.C.'s new [Vaccination Status Reporting Regulation](#) (Regulation) came into effect on July 1, 2019. The purpose of this Regulation is to ensure complete immunization records for school-age children are in the provincial Registry, which will increase public health's ability to respond in the event of an outbreak. The new Regulation applies to all children from Kindergarten to grade 12 in public and independent schools, international students and those who are home-schooled. At this time, students attending schools in First Nations communities are exempt from the regulation.

Public health staff are reviewing the electronic health registry and contacting all parents whose child is missing an immunization record. While most students are generally immunized by public health, some students may have been immunized by other health care providers. In these instances, parents may ask for a copy of their child's immunization history. Please provide a copy to parents on request and ask that they submit it to their local health centre.

Collecting immunization information also serves as a prompt for parents/guardians to have their children receive any outstanding vaccinations. Public health nurses continue to provide both routine and missing childhood vaccines to students in grades Kindergarten, 6, and 9 as per routine practice. Additionally, IH made the decision to actively offer missing childhood vaccines to students in grades 1, 11, and 12 in schools and health centres. As part of the Ministry expectations, all other parents of students with outstanding immunizations will be contacted and asked to contact their local health centre for an appointment. Health care providers who choose to immunize students can request school vaccines from their local health centre as per current practice.

Please continue to recommend and encourage immunizations for all children at all health care encounters.

### **Syphilis Outbreak and Screening in Pregnancy**

This year, for the first time since 2013 there have been congenital syphilis cases reported in BC. Overall the number of positive syphilis results has increased by 33% from last year, with an increase of more than 40% in positive tests in women aged 15 to 49.

In July 2019 BC's Provincial Health Officer declared a syphilis outbreak.

Interim guidelines for syphilis screening in pregnancy have been released:

*In addition to the current practice of testing all pregnant individuals at their first prenatal visit, it is now being recommended that a second screening test be administered at the time of delivery. Time of delivery refers to at time of admission for delivery to a health care facility or any time after 35 weeks gestation for those planning home births.*

More information about syphilis testing and treatment is available on the BC Centre for Disease website:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/syphilis>

### **Reporting of Pulmonary Illness associated with Vaping or Dabbing**

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) has issued a Notice to report cases of people with severe pulmonary disease associated with vaping and dabbing with no evidence of alternative plausible diagnoses to a Medical Health Officer (MHO).

**Please contact the MHO if you have a patient who meets the following criteria with symptoms onset on or after June 1, 2019:**

- 1. Reports vaping or dabbing using e-cigarette devices, related products or other means of inhaling a variety of products in the 90 days before symptom onset, AND**
- 2. Who has pulmonary infiltrates on X-ray imaging, AND**
- 3. Whose illness is not attributed to other causes.**

**The MHO can be reached during business hours via the IH Communicable Disease Unit at 1-866-778-7736 and after hours via the IH MHO On-call number: 1-866-457-5648.**

About Vaping:

Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling the aerosol, often referred to as vapor, which is produced by an e-cigarette or similar device. The term is used because e-cigarettes do not produce tobacco smoke, but rather an aerosol, often mistaken for water vapor, that actually consists of fine particles.

About Dabbing:

Dabs are concentrated doses of cannabis that are made by extracting THC and other cannabinoids using a solvent like butane or carbon dioxide, resulting in sticky oils also commonly referred to as wax, shatter, budder, and butane hash oil (BHO). They're heated on a hot surface, usually a nail, and then inhaled through a dab rig. Smoking dabs as a method of consumption has been around for at least a decade, but the advent of more advanced extraction methods have led to a flood of cannabis concentrates that have boosted dabbing's popularity.

More details are in the October 2019 Medical Health Officers Update which is available on the Interior Health website:

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/AboutUs/Leadership/MHO/MHO%20Updates/MHO%20Update%20-%20October%201,%202019.pdf>