

Updated: December 15

UPDATE: COVID vaccine rollout details, WorkSafe claims guide and fact sheet

BURNABY—While there is still a long way to go before we're living in a COVID-19-free world, the arrival of the first limited round of approximately 4,000 vaccines in B.C. this week indicates that we are entering the beginning of the end of the pandemic.

The provincial government has confirmed that the first priority groups to receive the vaccines in B.C.'s health care sector will include long-term care residents and staff, and health-care facility staff for COVID-19 patients in settings like intensive care units, COVID-19 wards and emergency departments. All other front-line health care workers who do not have direct contact with patients will be included in the second phase of vaccination, some time in the spring as more vaccine becomes available. For more information on vaccine distribution, see [the government's projected schedule](#) or [the BC Centre for Disease Control's latest update](#).

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has released [recommendations on key populations for early vaccination](#), including guidance on who should receive COVID-19 vaccines first. The recommendations include:

- Residents and staff of congregate living settings that provide care for seniors such as long-term care homes;
- Adults 70 years of age and older, beginning with adults 80 years of age and older, then decreasing the age limit by 5-year increments to age 70 years as supply becomes available;
- Health care workers (including all those who work in health care settings and personal support workers whose work involves direct contact with patients); and
- Adults in Indigenous communities where infection can have disproportionate consequences

For members who have concerns about the vaccine, more information is available at the BC government website linked above, and the federal government has also produced a [fact sheet](#). At this time, there is no indication that vaccination will be made mandatory. However, Provincial Health Officer orders will remain in effect even for those who have received the vaccination. Until members have access to the vaccine there will continue to be risk, so members are advised to continue using PPE appropriately as well as reporting to your Local when there are gaps in protection protocols.

For those seeking information on how to file a WorkSafeBC claim, CUPE OH&S Representative Tom McKenna has prepared a [guide](#) and [fact sheet](#) on the process.

The dedication of CUPE Community Health members to their work and to keeping patients safe during the pandemic has been extraordinary, and the union cannot thank you enough. CUPE will continue to be vigilant about maintaining safety measures and asking employers to update their safety plans as needed. We can now see the light at the end of the tunnel, but only once the majority of the population have been vaccinated can we expect to see a significant reduction in the safety protocols and measures imposed by the Provincial Health Officer.