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**MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS’
NEWSLETTER
No.350**

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Tuberculosis in the Cowichan Valley Region

- Active TB has been detected in the Cowichan Valley Region in 2023 and local transmission has occurred. Cases include people with precarious housing and investigation of contacts is taking place.
- Tuberculosis (TB) is a global disease and ~300 active cases are identified annually in BC (bit.ly/TBreports). Most cases are among people born outside of Canada and infected in their home country. Less commonly, TB transmission occurs within BC and risk factors include homelessness/underhoused and substance use.
- While the incidence of active TB is very low, we encourage clinicians to consider TB in patients presenting with compatible symptoms (cough persisting for more than two weeks, hemoptysis, weight loss, fever, night sweats), and obtain chest radiography and sputum testing for AFB. TB skin test and IGRA are not recommended when testing for active TB. TB clinical resources can be found at bit.ly/BCCDCTb.
- Consultation can be made through the Island TB Program at 250-519-1510, bit.ly/VIHAtb.

COVID-19 Spring Booster

- Based on guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (bit.ly/NACIspring), BC has initiated a spring COVID-19 booster campaign.
- The risk of severe disease after COVID-19 infection has decreased substantially due to very high vaccination coverage, decrease virulence of Omicron, and most people having been infected previously. A systematic review found that primary series vaccination and infection reduced the risk of severe disease by 97% at 12 months (bit.ly/hybridimmunity).
- Boosters have incremental benefits, which may be important for those at highest absolute risk of harm. Advanced age remains the primary risk factor for severe disease.
- Provincial eligibility criteria (for details see bit.ly/COVIDeligibility):

<i>Should</i> be offered to individuals who are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 years of age and older • Indigenous peoples 70 years of age and older • Residents of long term care (LTC) and alternate level of care clients awaiting placement • 18 years of age and older who are moderately to severely immunosuppressed • 50 years of age and older with certain underlying health conditions
<i>May</i> be offered to individuals with no prior history of SARS-CoV-2 infection who are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 to 79 years of age • Indigenous peoples 50 to 69 years of age • 18-49 years of age with certain underlying health conditions

- All other adults who do not meet the above criteria may receive a spring booster based on a self-declared primary care provider recommendation. You do not need to provide a written recommendation. Patients can call 1-833-838-2323 to self-declare and book.

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