

May 19, 2021

Greetings,

We are delighted to share with you that since May 3, 2021, communities in Northern Health have access to the Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic. This builds on the successes of the COVID-19 Online Clinic, which was created last year to support patients during the pandemic. The Virtual Clinic will be a permanent virtual service available to support health needs in our communities beyond COVID-19.

The Virtual Clinic supports the delivery of in-person primary care by our family doctors and nurse practitioners, who remain the cornerstone of our regional health care system. The Virtual Clinic soft launched in Chetwynd and Fraser Lake on November 16, 2020, and since that time has been experiencing increasing demand across the region.

The Clinic provides virtually-enabled and culturally-safe primary and community care services for unattached and vulnerable patients, and for patients whose access to primary care is limited due to geography, business hours or seasonal weather. Telephone and video conference services are available from 10 am to 10 pm, 7 days a week, including holidays, reducing pressure on our acute care facilities. The clinic also provides additional support to rural physicians as they care for their patients.

The clinic aims to provide accessible and same-day health care service, using encrypted technology to ensure a secure experience. Northern Health aims to build a plan towards facilitating attachment and longitudinal care relationships for patients in their home community. A continued part of the service will be information-sharing with the patient's primary care provider and other members of the patient's primary care interprofessional team. This includes working with the person's primary care provider to arrange for in-person follow-up as required.

The clinic continues to integrate with the Substance Use Virtual Clinic to provide substance use services. The Virtual Clinic will continue to provide screening, assessment and coordination of testing for COVID-19. The name 'COVID-19 Online Clinic' has shifted to the 'Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic' to reflect the expanded service offering. The phone number remains the same: 1-844-645-7811.

As we launch this important and innovative service, we encourage you to, where appropriate, help us share information about it with your contacts, friends and family.

- Sharing information with people directly when you speak with them
- Sharing announcement details and social media posts from our campaign on social media – visit northernhealth.ca for our social accounts
- If you have an opportunity, speak to members of the physician community to emphasize that this supplements the important work they do every day for our communities. They are the cornerstone of our health care program, but the Virtual Clinic is something that patients have had access to during the pandemic, and now expect. It will also help support unattached patients and underserved communities, and rural doctors working in isolated environments.
- Share the below summary in your next newsletter:
 - o Northern Health has launched the Northern Health Virtual Clinic, a permanent virtual clinic to replace the COVID-19 Online Clinic created earlier in the pandemic to serve patients. The Virtual Clinic is designed for:
 - Patients without a family doctor
 - Patients in rural communities for whom access to their family doctor may be limited due weather or other barriers
 - Patients needing after-hours health care
 - Patients experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms
 - Available from 10 am to 10 pm, 7 days a week, including holidays
 - Contact is 1-844-645-7811
 - Information is also available at <https://www.northernhealth.ca/locations/medical-clinics/virtual-clinic>

Please feel free to contact us anytime if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Kelly Gunn, Vice President, Primary and Community Care and Professional Practice

Jeff Hunter, Chief Information Officer

[Department]

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