

Perinatal Health Update

1 **All pregnant individuals are encouraged to register with public health, early in their pregnancy**

Island Health has improved the registration process for 'Right From the Start', a universal public health program that provides prenatal and postnatal support. The new online process is more accessible, simple to use, and provides everyone the opportunity to speak confidentially with a public health nurse about their pregnancy. The goal is to help establish a safe, trusting relationship with public health, and provide access to preventive and supportive services and resources at this important life stage. The short online registration can be completed by the pregnant individual or their health care provider. Public health offers many universal services to all perinatal clients, including:

- A free baby bed for all families (see below)
- Enrollment in Smart Parent, a free prenatal education program that sends three current, evidence-based educational text messages per week to help guide a pregnant individual through each week of pregnancy
- Support **connecting with a prenatal care provider** in their community
- Free **online or in-person prenatal breast/chest/infant feeding class**
- Free online **prenatal labour and delivery and newborn education** through Perinatal Services BC (see 'perinatal health resources' below)
- Referral to **prenatal groups** in their community
- Distribution of '**Baby's Best Chance**' books or online version
- **Immunization** resources and education
- **Nutrition** information and resources



RTFS
Right From The Start

Pregnant individuals with specific risk factors that may impact their pregnancy or parenting journey may qualify for:

- One-on-one **dental health consultation** through the Smiles First Program available at health units and some other community locations (this service is also available to eligible parents of infants, toddlers and preschoolers)
- A long-term, therapeutic relationship with a public health nurse through enhanced family health initiatives (e.g., Nurse Family Partnership)



RTFS
Registration
Poster

Access to all of these public health services starts with registration for the 'Right from the Start' program.

Island Health Medical Health Officers

Chief MHO: Dr. Réka Gustafson 250-519-3406; North Island: Dr. Charmaine Enns 250-331-8591

Central Island: 250-739-6304; Cowichan Region: Dr. Melissa Wan (interim) 250-737-2020

South Island: Dr. Carol Fenton, Dr. Christina Kay, Dr. Mike Benusic, Dr. Mark Cachia, Dr. Melissa Wan 250-519-3406

islandhealth.ca/about-us/medical-health-officers

2

Donor breast milk collection depots are available in Victoria, Nanaimo and now in Campbell River

There are now 3 depots for donating breastmilk in the Island Health region: Victoria General Hospital, Nanaimo Regional General Hospital and the **Campbell River public health unit**.

Donors pre-screened by the [provincial milk bank at BC Womens' Hospital](#) can drop off frozen breast milk at any of the 3 Island Health locations. The milk is then transported to BC Women's Hospital for pasteurization and distribution to neonatal intensive care, maternity and pediatric units across the province.



BC Women's
Hospital Milk Bank

3

A free baby bed is available for all Island Health families

The [Baby Bed](#) program is a universal safe-sleep initiative that provides a safe bed for all babies in the region. Sleep-related deaths are among the leading cause of death in healthy infants. The baby bed is a sturdy bassinet constructed of heavy cardboard with a mattress insert, creating a safe place for babies to sleep.

Pregnant people in their third trimester or families with a new baby, up to two months old, are eligible to receive a free baby bed. The beds can be used until babies are up to 4-5 months old, or until they begin to roll over. To get a free baby bed, people can call their [Island Health local health unit](#).



Baby Bed

4

Immunization in pregnancy is strongly recommended

Immunization during pregnancy protects the pregnant person and their newborn. Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended during pregnancy and can be administered at any time. Tdap is recommended in every pregnancy, between 27 and 32 weeks. RSV vaccine (AbrysvoTM) is funded by the First Nations Health Authority and is available for individual consideration and private purchase (~\$300) for others, to be administered between 32 and 36 weeks. [Nirsevimab](#) is a long-acting monoclonal antibody that protects against RSV disease in the newborn for at least the first 6 months of life. It is available to a limited number of [eligible infants](#) throughout BC this year and may be available for private purchase (~\$900) at limited locations (ex: Travel Medicine and Vaccination Centre). Both AbrysvoTM and Nirsevimab offer protection to the newborn for at least the first 6 months of life.



BCCDC
Immunization
Manual

5

More recommended perinatal health resources:

For patients:	For healthcare providers:
• Health unit locations • HealthlinkBC • Safer Sleep for my Baby (Perinatal Services BC) • Period of Purple Crying (BC Children's Hospital) • Honouring our Babies Toolkit: Safe Sleep (First Nations Health Authority) • Vaccines In Pregnancy • Pregnancy and Parent Learning Centre (Perinatal Services BC) – *NEW • Free Online Prenatal Education Classes	• ‘Right from the Start’ Registration • The Perinatal and Newborn Health Hub (Perinatal Services BC) • BCCDC immunization manual



Please print and post for patients:

ARE YOU PREGNANT?



Registering for Island Health’s Right From the Start Program is for everyone! You will be contacted by a Public Health Nurse to explore pregnancy & health goals, and offered support for your pregnancy and beyond.

Working with you and your care team, we offer:

- free health & pregnancy information
- access to prenatal education & support
- discussion of infant feeding goals prior to baby’s arrival
- referrals to community resources specific to your individual needs
- and more!



To register, scan the QR code or visit:
www.islandhealth.ca/pregnancy

Questions?
Contact your local Health Unit.

