

INSIDE: IMMUNIZATION CLINICS | HOSPICE CARE | COVID-19 RESEARCH | MEAL BOWL RECIPES

# ISLAND health

LIVE YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE

COVID-19  
A LOOK BACK

MEMORY LOSS  
AND AGING

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF  
SPENDING TIME IN NATURE

Free Publication  
Spring 2021 Issue





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Vaccination clinics at Island Health.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



As the days get longer, we can see that spring is coming. Warmer weather and brighter days are ahead as we feel the seasonal change that puts a “spring” in our step. Our day-to-day lives continue to evolve as the measures we have been taking over the past year keep us safe while COVID-19 vaccines begin to bring us hope for better days to come.

At Island Health, our entire organization has pulled together to embark on a mass immunization program on a scale we have never seen before. For more information on immunizations, please see the article on page 8.

While immunization is an important part of our fight against COVID-19, it is not the “silver bullet” for eradicating this virus. We must also continue to practice behaviours that slow transmission — wearing a mask, maintaining social distance, keeping our social circles small, washing our hands and following all public health guidelines.

We have now been living with the COVID-19 pandemic for more than a year. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has sacrificed to keep each other safe and healthy. This has been a year like no other, and the

way our entire community has worked together (while staying physically apart) to survive and thrive during this time has been both humbling and inspiring.

I know we are weary and some days it's hard to carry on, but I also know that the same spirit that got us this far will help us see this through to the end of the pandemic.

With heartfelt good wishes,

Kathy MacNeil,  
Island Health President and CEO

*“We have now been living with the COVID-19 pandemic for more than a year. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has sacrificed to keep each other safe and healthy. This has been a year like no other, and the way our entire community has worked together (while staying physically apart) to survive and thrive during this time has been both humbling and inspiring.”*



# CONTRIBUTORS



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Audrey Larson feels honoured to live, work and learn in Coast Salish territory. As a communications and engagement advisor, she enjoys getting to know people in the communities in which she works. Audrey believes wholeheartedly in the power of collective impact and strives to support community connections that create better health for all.



Andrea Zeelie-Varga works in Island Health's Research Department to enhance education, engagement, and funding opportunities across the region. Andrea is grateful to live, work, and learn in Coast Salish territory.

# FROM THE EDITOR

We have a lot of COVID-related topics in this issue—an immunization update, COVID-19 research topics, a look back over the past year and even some working-from-home mealtime ideas. While COVID-19 is always front and centre, life goes on and we take a look at other topics including a moving story about one family's journey with end-of-life care and an innovative creative project that allows those with substance use to share their stories and be heard.

My favourite story in this issue is our feature on the benefits of being in nature. It's been a long year and for many of us, the opportunity to get outside has been a game-changer. I know that my daily walks with my doodle Sadie have made all the difference. Whether we are just strolling the neighbourhood or taking a long walk down by the beach, being outside and appreciating the beauty around me (rain or shine—Sadie doesn't care about the weather) has helped keep up my spirits and my energy.

Spring is in the air and warmer days ahead—go play outside!



*Susan*

Susan Evans  
Editor, *Island Health* magazine  
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With great respect and humility, Island Health acknowledges the Coast Salish, Nuuchah-Nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw cultural families; whose relationship with these lands remains unbroken; whose homelands Island Health occupies. In making this acknowledgement, we commit to walk softly on this land and work to uphold self determination of the health of Indigenous peoples.

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# HOPEFUL, COMMITTED, COMPASSIONATE: A YEAR OF ISLAND HEALTH AND COVID-19

by Glenn Drexhage



On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic. That same day, Island Health had its first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus.

The change and disruption since have been remarkable – the likes of which none of us have experienced in our personal or professional lives. As we begin the second year of this pandemic, here is a brief overview of some of the milestones that helped define these perplexing, stressful and extraordinary past 12 months.

First, we pay our respects to those who lost their lives due to COVID-19, and offer our sincere condolences to everyone who has lost loved ones to the virus during the past year. By early March, 27 people had died of COVID-19 in Island Health, and nearly 1,400 in BC. Each death from COVID is heartbreaking, and we share our condolences with families, loved ones, communities and our teams who cared for them.

## LONG-TERM CARE

Long-term care (LTC) is perhaps the best example of how our collective efforts have helped protect those most vulnerable. Visitor restrictions at Island Health facilities and outpatient clinics – including

long-term care homes – took effect in mid-March 2020, and Island Health moved quickly to limit staff to working at only one LTC facility. While facilities in other jurisdictions were hard hit by outbreaks early in the pandemic, Island Health's first LTC outbreak did not occur until November. Since then, there have been limited LTC outbreaks across the region – and in each case, Island Health worked closely with facility leadership and staff to mitigate the impact of the virus on this vulnerable population. We know that those who live and work in long-term care have made great sacrifices, as have families and loved ones who were unable to visit. The addition of social and essential visits back into long-term care in the fall was a relief to many, and we look forward to welcoming more visitors back into facilities as soon as it is safe to do so.

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND COVID-19

Indigenous peoples and communities have been disproportionately affected

by COVID-19. As part of its COVID-19 response, Island Health has supported the First Nations Health Authority and community-led efforts to provide culturally safe care throughout the region. Much more needs to be done, but this is a promising step forward. “Island Health and FNHA are working together to listen and learn as a team as we support First Nations across the Island region respond to COVID-19,” says Dr. Jeff Beselt, Island Health's Co-lead of the Rural, Remote and Indigenous COVID-19 response. “A consistent focus is carrying out our work in a way that is guided by both traditional teachings and epidemiologic data, in order to plan, respond and address systemic Indigenous-specific racism through shared action. This is exemplified in unprecedented level of cooperation and commitment to the COVID-19 vaccination rollout.”

## STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The way we work has also transformed. Between March 2020 and February 2021, Island Health's workforce grew by 7%. About 450 temporary positions

were created specifically for the pandemic response, including several nursing positions to support contact-tracing, immunization, public health and community health. Patient ambassadors and registration clerks/call centre employees have also been important additions. Meanwhile, more than 80 volunteers have supported Island Health's COVID-19 response by filling roles such as wayfinding for clients at vaccination clinics – and we expect the number of volunteers to grow exponentially in coming months.

Because of the pandemic, many Island Health staff began working from home last spring – more than 2,000 employees worked remotely during the peak of the first wave – and many continue to do so. But working remotely didn't stifle innovation or creativity. Indeed, in some cases it spurred it.

## ISLAND HEALTH INNOVATES

Island Health's call centre is a virtual operation that launched last April to focus on COVID-19 testing. The call centre was made up of registration and scheduling clerks, along with redeployed public health nurses who provided assessments. Once vaccine became

available, the call centre added scheduling immunizations to its important work.

Island Health completed about 25,000 virtual visits with MyVirtualVisit. The video service, which launched on February 11, 2020, allows patients to participate in virtual visits from their own homes. Several clinical programs, including Ambulatory Care, Mental Health and Substance Use, Primary Care, Long-Term Care and Community Care adopted MyVirtualVisit.

We also launched the COVID-19 Virtual Monitoring Program, which monitors COVID-19 cases and contacts from a distance, enabling timely medical help for those who need it. By early March, nearly 6,500 patients had participated in the service, and 85% were highly satisfied or satisfied with the program. A more intensive home monitoring program was added for patients with more severe COVID symptoms, and Public Health Nurses started using home health monitoring to check in daily with COVID-19 patients to monitor symptoms and provide support.

Island Health residents are now also able to sign up to the MyHealth patient portal, enabling easier access to their

own digital health records, including COVID-19 results. Read more about My Health on page 30.

## THE NEW NORMAL: GET IMMUNIZED

It continues to be crucial for us to remain vigilant and do our part. For now, we must stay the course even as vaccination ramps up. Wash our hands. Wear a mask. Keep our distance. Avoid social gatherings. Stay hopeful, stay committed, stay compassionate. And when the time comes, get immunized – to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. The light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter.

## COVID BY THE NUMBERS: ISLAND HEALTH

March 2020 to early March 2021

- More than 2,500 cases
- 139 people hospitalized
- 450 temporary new jobs in Island Health
- More than 25,000 virtual visits with care providers
- More than 60,000 immunizations



# B.C.'S IMMUNIZATION PLAN

The B.C. government has developed a four-phase immunization plan to immunize all those who want the vaccine. The timeline for B.C.'s COVID-19 Vaccination Plan is dependent on vaccine supply and availability. All people in B.C. recommended to receive the vaccine will have the opportunity to get it in 2021.

**You will not miss your chance to get the vaccine when a new phase starts.** Once you become eligible, you are always eligible.

## KNOW THE REGISTRATION START DATE FOR YOUR AGE GROUP

Phase 2 of the COVID-19 Immunization Plan began in March. During this phase approximately 400,000 people will be immunized from March to mid-April, including seniors age 80 and over, Indigenous peoples and people who live and work in independent living. As we move through the age cohorts and stages, we will be updating our website to let you know who can register and when. Check back often.

Please do not call until your registration window opens. This ties up the phone

lines and makes it harder for those who are eligible to book their appointments.

**Call 1-833-348-4787, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. daily.**

The call centre is for **booking appointments only**. If you have questions about the COVID vaccine, you can text 1-604-660-2421 or call 1-888-COVID19 (7:30am to 8:00pm). Island Health specific questions can be emailed to: [VIslandHealth.Info@viha.ca](mailto:VIslandHealth.Info@viha.ca).

You can book a vaccine appointment for yourself or your spouse. You can also have a family member or friend call for you. It's easy and safe to book over the phone. You will need your Personal Health Number, which can be found on the back of your driver's license or your Care Card.

Information on registration for Phases 3 (ages 79 – 60) and 4 (ages 59 – 18) will

be announced in the coming weeks. In these phases, you will be able to register and book appointments through an online registration tool or by phone, but you will still have to wait until your age group is eligible. When you book your appointment, you will be able to choose how you want to be contacted in the future—email, text or phone call.

People who get their first vaccine dose will be notified by their preferred method of communication when they are eligible to book an appointment for their booster dose.

**REMEMBER** it is still important to continue to practice public health measures, such as hand washing, physical distancing, wearing a mask in indoor public spaces, limiting our social interactions, and staying home when sick even after receiving the vaccine.

# Community Health Services at Island Health

Island Health offers support for clients in the community including seniors' services, self-care, assisted living, long term care, support groups, chronic health conditions, and preventative services along with other supportive health services.

**Many seniors access community health services** depending on their health as they age. Following are descriptions\* of how a person might feel as they age. Read through the list to see which best describes you or someone you know and note the accompanying advice.

## HOW ARE YOU AGING?

**VERY WELL.** I'm robust and energetic. I'm socially connected, I exercise regularly, and I'm among the fittest for my age. **Excellent! Keep it up.**

**WELL.** I have no active disease symptoms. I exercise often, or I'm very active at times, such as seasonally. **Good for you! Stay active and address problems quickly as they arise.**

**MANAGING WELL.** My medical problems are well controlled, but I'm not active

beyond routine walking. **Try to increase your activity and gain greater fitness.**

**VULNERABLE.** I'm independent, but symptoms often limit my activities and outings. I feel slow or tired during the day. **Talk to your health care provider — you can still take steps to improve your health.**

*For people in the first four categories, try to stay active or increase your activity levels.*

**MILD DIFFICULTY.** I'm slowing down, and need help with things like finances, transportation, housework and medications. I have trouble with shopping, walking outside alone, and preparing meals. I spend less time with others than I'd like to. **Talk to your health care provider about changes to your health. Find out about supportive community services.**

**MODERATE DIFFICULTY.** I need help with all outside activities. Stairs are a

problem and I may need help with bathing and dressing. I feel increasingly isolated. **It's essential to get support now to stay at home. Contact Community Health Services for an assessment.**

**SEVERE DIFFICULTY.** I'm completely dependent on others to help me with personal care. My medical issues might be physical or mental, such as cognitive decline or dementia. **Consult with those who care for you and make sure you are in the right place for the care and assistance you need.**

*For people in the last three categories, work with your health care provider and family to ensure you have the right health care and community supports.*

\*Simplified Rockwood Scale used with permission. With thanks to Eldercare Project in Cowichan (EPIC)

## DID YOU KNOW? PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET VACCINATED WHEN ENCOURAGED BY FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

Share your immunization story with the people in your life to encourage them to get vaccinated when it's their turn.

## SOME EVIDENCE-BASED FACTS YOU CAN RELY ON.

- The vaccine prevents you from getting seriously ill.
- The vaccine reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others.
- COVID-19 immunizations are safe.
- Getting immunized is easy.
- The vaccine is not a 'live virus' and can't cause COVID-19.

For more information, please visit [islandhealth.ca/covid19vaccine](https://islandhealth.ca/covid19vaccine).



## ISLAND HEALTH'S COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES IS HERE TO HELP.

**COMMON QUESTIONS** regarding Community Health Services:

**What community health services can Island Health provide me?** Island Health Community Health Services provides professional services in the community and in your home, depending on your assessed care need and urgency of need. Services may be short-term if you are recovering from a procedure or condition or long-term if you need ongoing care. For details of services provided, visit [www.island-health.ca/our-services/home-care-services](https://www.island-health.ca/our-services/home-care-services).

**Where can I get help cleaning and managing my home?** Household management, including cleaning, is not a publicly funded health care service. Many services provide house cleaning in your community for a fee.

**My family member has memory challenges and needs help at home. Can someone come in and help them every day?** The type and frequency of help a person with memory challenges may need is determined based on a clinical assessment done by a health care professional. Please call the

Community Access Centre to discuss your or your loved ones' situation.

**CALL THE COMMUNITY ACCESS CENTRE:**  
**Southern Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands residents:** 250-388-2273 toll free 1-888-533-2273

**Oceanside, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, West Coast, Chemainus, Ladysmith, and Cowichan residents:** 250-739-5749 toll free 1-877-734-4101

**Comox Valley, Campbell River and Mount Waddington residents:** 250-331-8570 or toll-free 1-866-928-4988



# Spending time in nature—more than a walk in the park.

by Susan Evans

*I go to nature to be soothed and healed,  
and to have my senses put in order.*

—John Burroughs

**John Burroughs was onto something.** The American naturalist and nature essayist (1837 – 1921) believed that being in nature was healing. The latest research confirms his theory.

There are a number of studies that demonstrate the positive effects of spending time in nature—everything from reducing stress and anxiety, improving sleep, to lowering blood pressure and improved cognitive abilities.

Shinrin-Yoku means to “bathe in the atmosphere of the forest.” The term was created in the 1980s by the Japanese government as part of a campaign to encourage stressed-out city dwellers to spend time in the surrounding forests for health benefits.

The concept of forest bathing has now become popular around the world. The idea is to spend time in nature, unplugged from any devices. It isn’t exercise (although it does require movement). It is simply being in nature, connecting with it through our senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch.

“Forest bathing follows the ancient practice of being in a relationship with the land,” says Kelly Kiss, Certified Forest Therapy guide, Salish Sea Nature Connections. “As guides, we help people deepen their connection to the natural world and connect with their senses.”

Spending time in nature can even be part of a physician’s toolbox. PaRx is an initiative of the BC Parks Foundation, driven by health-care professionals who want to improve their patients’ health by connecting them to nature. Featuring practical resources like quick

tips and patient handouts, its goal is to make “prescribing” time in nature simple, fun and effective. You can find more information at [parksprescriptions.ca](http://parksprescriptions.ca).

First, we need to turn off our phones and unplug to realize the benefits—not an easy thing to do for many people. We need to let our minds wander and our senses of smell, touch, sight and hearing fully experience nature. This is not about a brisk jog in the wilderness, but more like a slow walk through green space, breathing in the environment.

“Spending quiet, thoughtful time in the forest feels in many ways, like coming home to a peaceful place inside your heart,” says Kiss. “The practice of forest bathing is a mindful “immersion” into the space of trees, plants and the beings of the forest. It’s not about getting to a place, rather it’s about slowing down, and using your senses to mindfully notice and connect with the natural world, and yourself,” she adds.

Research shows that people who spend at least 2 hours a week in nature, 20-plus minutes at a time report significantly better health and well-being. And while forest bathing conjures up the vision of hiking in an old-growth forest, it’s an activity that can be done in city parks, horticultural centres or even your backyard under a canopy of trees.

It might seem impossible to unplug our phones and find the time to wander in the woods without a Fitbit goal...yet it turns out that a simple walk in the woods can change more than our perspective.



## Being in nature is good for you.

### LOWERS LEVELS OF CORTISOL

Cortisol is known as the stress hormone and for good reason. It is abundant in your body when you are suffering from stress and can contribute to a wide range of issues. Walking in nature can help

to lower levels of cortisol in your body, reducing stress and improving mood.

### EXPOSURE TO FORESTS BOOSTS OUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

While we breathe in the fresh air, we breathe in phytoncides, airborne

chemicals that plants give off to protect themselves from insects. Phytoncides have antibacterial and antifungal qualities which help plants fight disease. When people breathe in these chemicals, our bodies respond by increasing the number and activity of a type of white blood cell called natural killer cells or NK.

### IMPROVED SLEEP

Sunlight regulates your body's melatonin production which in turn will help you to get a better night's sleep. And the exercise you're getting while walking in nature also contributes to improved sleep quality.

### IT HELPS YOU UNPLUG

Walking in nature is a great way to step into a quiet world away from the busyness of life and constant notifications—provided you turn off your smartphone. Allowing your mind to drift and simply “be” can enhance creativity and problem-solving abilities. It can also help with focus better and renew our ability to be patient.

### INCREASES PRODUCTION OF VITAMIN D

Walking outside increases your production of vitamin D. Vitamin D acts like a ‘master hormone’ and can help to boost other hormones that improve mood.

### INCREASES ‘FEEL GOOD’ HORMONES

As well as melatonin, when you are walking in nature, you'll also start to release more endorphins—hormones that can help reduce pain and increase feelings of wellness.

### JUST BREATHE

Walking in nature encourages deep, rhythmical breathing, which in turn stimulates the body's parasympathetic reaction, helping you to feel calmer.

### BOOSTS YOUR ENERGY

The air you breathe when you walk in a natural environment will leave you feeling energized.

*I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees.*

—Henry David Thoreau

## How to try walking in nature.

There are many online resources and books to learn about forest bathing. You may also choose to take a guided forest walk with a certified guide. Just to give you an idea of what to expect, here are five simple steps to get started.

STEP 1 – leave behind your phone, camera or any other distractions, so that you can be fully present in the experience.

STEP 2 – Leave behind your goals and expectations. Walks slowly, wandering without trying to “get there” (just make sure not to get lost).

STEP 3 – Pause from time to time, to look more closely at a leaf or notice the sensation of the path beneath your feet.

STEP 4 – Find a comfy spot to take a seat and listen to the sounds around you. See how the behaviour of the birds and other animals changes when they become used to your presence.

STEP 5 – If you go with others, agree to resist talking until the end of the walk, when you could gather to share your experiences.

### BOOKS ABOUT FOREST BATHING

To learn more about forest bathing check out these books—most are available from your local library.

**Your Guide to Forest Bathing: Experience the Healing Power of Nature** by M. Amos Clifford

**Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness** by Dr. Qing Li

**Forest Therapy** by Sarah Ivens

There are also many online resources—try googling forest bathing then narrow your search from there.

### PLACES TO GO ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

For information on local hikes and walks, visit the website [vancouverisland.travel/easy-hikes-and-walks-on-vancouver-island](http://vancouverisland.travel/easy-hikes-and-walks-on-vancouver-island). This website also lists walks that are wheelchair accessible.

You can visit local parks and gardens like the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific

and take your own walk in nature. Check your local parks guide online for lists of available parks and gardens.

Super Natural BC offers some ideas for forest bathing walks here [www.hellobc.com/stories/forest-bathing-hideaways-hikes-on-vancouver-island/](http://www.hellobc.com/stories/forest-bathing-hideaways-hikes-on-vancouver-island/)

### FOREST BATHING GUIDES AND TOURS

Forest bathing guided walks are not a naturalist walk or a hike. There is no plant or animal identification, and no agenda. Walks move slowly over a gentle landscape and are usually 1 km or less in length. For this reason, the practise of forest therapy is accessible to people of all fitness levels, ages and abilities. Walks are typically between two and three hours in length.

There is usually a charge for these guided walks and there are organizations around Vancouver Island that offer this service—to find one of these services, google forest walk tours Vancouver Island.



# Working from home mealtimes

by Susan Evans

Janelle Hatch, a Registered Dietitian with Island Health, knows all about the advantages and pitfalls of eating all your meals at home, all day, every day.

**“One of the biggest pitfalls is staying** in front of your computer all day and not taking a break,” says Hatch. “It’s important to move away from your screen and lunch is a good opportunity to do that—and take a real break, don’t just make something and bring it right back to your desk to eat in front of your computer,” she adds.

Most of us are aware of the importance, for both our mental and physical health, of taking breaks during the day to get up and move around. This might be more likely to happen at your workplace where there are opportunities for a “water cooler” break or joining colleagues for lunch in the staffroom or at a local eatery. And while we can still “meet up” on Zoom, it doesn’t give us the break we need to get away from our desks.

The combination of being sedentary and having easy access to the refrigerator has contributed to what many have called the “COVID-19 pounds”, a riff on the weight some people have gained over the past year.

While the call of the fridge can be loud and mindless munching can be easy while you are glued to your screen, there is an upside to being home all day in terms of what you eat.

“I think the advantage of working from home is the opportunity to make yourself a healthy lunch, one that you don’t have to prepare and pack in advance, only to find that it isn’t really what you feel like eating when lunchtime rolls around,” says Hatch. “At home, you can grab leftovers or make a fresh

salad or sandwich. It’s about being kind to yourself and making the most of this break by making something yummy (and healthy) for lunch.”

Hatch also suggests that if your children are home with you, have lunch with them and enjoy a family meal together—this provides a break and chance to connect over food.

Over-snacking has also become a pandemic pitfall. It’s easy to reach into the cupboard and grab a handful of cookies or another cup of coffee during the day, whether you’re hungry or just bored.

Notes Hatch, “I’m all for snacking, just not every half-hour—plan it for a couple of hours after lunch. Being at home provides the opportunity to prepare a good healthy snack so chop up an apple and put some peanut butter on it or grab a handful of nuts and some fruit.”

Hatch suggests that those working at home try to keep a similar schedule to their routine at work. “You wouldn’t go into the kitchen at work every half hour to get a snack, so don’t do it home. Instead of grabbing a snack, take a few minutes to do some yoga stretches or even head outside and take a deep breath,” says Hatch.

Hydration is also key—and that doesn’t mean more coffee. “Another great reason to take a break is to grab a glass of water,” says Hatch. “Keep a jug of water in the fridge and keep refilling that glass on your desk—staying hydrated will help keep you alert. It also fills you up so you won’t be as tempted to start snacking.”

And while you might feel that it’s a shame not to drink that whole pot of coffee now that you’ve made it—don’t. Too much caffeine can make you feel jittery and drinking coffee after 11 a.m. might disturb your sleep cycle. Stick with water to stay refreshed during the day.

“When you’re at home so much it’s important to think about what you have on hand,” notes Hatch. “Keep that tray of cut-up veggies in the fridge and lots of fresh fruit in the bowl on the counter. Keep a big jug of water on hand, you can even throw some lemon slices for added flavour. Make it easy to make those healthy choices.”

The other advantage to being home all day is more time for dinner prep. With a little advance planning to make sure you have ingredients on hand, there is often more time at the end of the day or at lunch to pop something in the oven or the slow cooker and avoid the “frozen pizza or frozen nuggets” rushed dinner choice.

“One of my favourite dinners for our family these days are meal bowls—all you need are veggies, a protein like beans or cooked chicken breast along with a whole grain like brown rice and you can quickly build a delicious meal,” says Hatch. “We have everything chopped and ready and each person can build their own bowl, the kids love it and it’s easy prep and clean-up.”

While working from home might not last forever, building these healthy eating habits might.

Following are some meal bowl recipes to try with your family.

*“One of my favourite dinners for our family these days are meal bowls—all you need are veggies, a protein like beans or cooked chicken breast along with a whole grain like brown rice and you can quickly build a delicious meal.”*



# HONEY SRIRACHA CHICKEN AND BROCCOLI BOWLS

Makes 4 servings

## INGREDIENTS:

- 3

chicken breasts  
(24 oz/680 g), diced  
into 1” (2.5 cm) pieces
- 1

egg white, beaten
- 2 tbsp (30 mL)

corn starch
- 1¼ tsp (6.25 mL)

kosher salt, divided
- olive oil spray
- 1

head broccoli, cut into  
small florets
- 3 tsp (15 mL)

sesame oil, divided
- fresh black pepper,  
to taste
- 2 tbsp (30 mL)

honey
- 2 tbsp (30 mL)

sriracha sauce
- 1 tsp (5 mL)

seasoned rice vinegar
- 2

scallions, sliced
- 1 tsp (5 mL)

black and white sesame  
seeds, or to taste
- 2 cups (475 mL)

brown rice, cooked

## DIRECTIONS:

1.

Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Place the chicken in the egg white, then in corn starch, and season with ¾ tsp (4 mL) salt. Spray a large nonstick sheet pan generously with olive oil spray, then add the chicken pieces, leaving room on one end for the broccoli. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes.
2.

Remove chicken from oven and flip, then add broccoli on the other half of the pan. Drizzle broccoli with 2 tsp (10 mL) sesame oil; season with ½ tsp (2.5 mL) salt and pepper, to taste. Place back in the oven and bake until the chicken is cooked through and the broccoli is tender, about 10 minutes.
3.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk honey, sriracha sauce, rice vinegar and remaining 1 tsp (5 mL) sesame oil together until smooth. Add the chicken and toss to coat.
4.

Divide chicken, broccoli, and rice among four bowls; top with scallions and sesame seeds and serve.

Recipe adapted from [Skinnytaste.com](#)



# ZA'ATAR ROASTED CARROT AND CHICKPEA YOGURT BOWLS

Makes 4 servings

## INGREDIENTS:

- 15 oz (425 mL) can

chickpeas
- 16

small heirloom carrots,  
about 16 oz (454 g) total
- 3 tbsp (45 mL)

olive oil, divided
- 2 tsp (10 mL)

Za’atar spice blend
- kosher salt
- fresh black pepper, to taste
- 1

lemon, including juice  
and zest
- ½ bunch

kale, ribs removed and  
discarded (2½ oz/70 g  
total without ribs)
- 2 cups (475 mL)

full-fat Greek yogurt
- 1 oz (28 g)

feta cheese, crumbled

## DIRECTIONS:

1.

Preheat oven to 350°F (176°C). Spray a large sheet pan with olive oil.
2.

Drain and rinse chickpeas and transfer to a plate lined with paper towels. Let them dry completely. Wash and dry carrots and trim the stems.
3.

Place carrots and chickpeas on the prepared sheet pan and drizzle with 2 tbsp (30 mL) olive oil, Za’atar, salt and black pepper.
4.

Bake until the carrots are crisp-tender and browned, about 40–45 minutes, turning halfway.
5.

While they are cooking, grate 1 tsp (5 mL) lemon zest and set aside. Slice the kale into ¼” (0.6 cm) thin ribbons and place in a bowl; squeeze in ½ tbsp (7.5 mL) juice from lemon, ½ tbsp (7.5 mL) olive oil and ¼ tsp (1.25 mL) salt. Toss together. Massage the kale with your hands for 1–2 minutes, until soft.
6.

In four shallow bowls, swoosh ½ cup (125 mL) yogurt in the bottom of each.
7.

While the carrots are still hot, transfer to prepared yogurt bowls; season with salt and lemon zest.
8.

Scatter the chickpeas over each dish and drizzle with the remaining oil; top with kale and crumbled feta and serve.

Recipe adapted from [Skinnytaste.com](#)





# SHRIMP FAJITA BOWLS

Makes 4 servings

## INGREDIENTS:

### FOR THE SHRIMP:

- 1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- juice of 1 lime
- 1 tsp (5 mL) chili powder
- 1 tsp (5 mL) cumin
- 1 tsp (5 mL) oregano
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) smoked paprika
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) kosher salt
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) garlic powder
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) onion powder
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 lb (450 g) large peeled, deveined, tail-off shrimp

### FOR THE VEGGIES:

- 2 medium red bell peppers, sliced
- 1 large red onion, sliced
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste

### FOR THE RICE:

- 3 cups (700 ml) cooked brown rice
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) chopped cilantro
- ¼ tsp (1.25 mL) salt
- juice of ½ lime

### FOR THE SALSA AND TOPPING:

- 1 cup (250 mL) diced tomatoes
- ⅓ cup (80 mL) chopped white onion
- ¼ cup (60 mL) chopped cilantro
- pinch kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 small, 4-oz (113 g) Hass avocado, sliced

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (205°C).
2. For shrimp: In a large bowl, whisk together all ingredients except shrimp. Add the shrimp and toss to evenly coat. Set aside and allow to marinate while you make the veggies.
3. Combine all veggie ingredients in a large bowl. Use your hands to toss and evenly coat veggies with oil and seasoning.
4. Transfer veggies to a sheet pan and roast 20 minutes, tossing halfway through.
5. Meanwhile, prepare the rice and salsa. In a medium bowl, combine rice with cilantro, salt and lime juice.
6. In small bowl, make the salsa by combining the tomatoes, onion, cilantro, salt and pepper.
7. Remove veggies from oven and place marinated shrimp (leaving excess marinade in the bowl) evenly among the veggies.
8. Return to the oven and roast 8 minutes.
9. Place ¾ cup rice in each of 4 bowls. Evenly divide the shrimp, veggies, salsa and sliced avocado among each bowl and serve.

Recipe adapted from [Skinnytaste.com](#)



# BUDDHA BOWL

Makes 4 servings

## INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups (950 mL) broccoli florets
- 2 cups (250 mL) cubed butternut squash
- 1 small onion, sliced into half-moons
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- Kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- olive oil spray
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups (250 mL) cooked brown rice
- 1 small, 4-oz (113 g) Hass avocado, sliced
- ¼ cup (60 mL) chopped pecans

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (205°C).
2. On a large sheet pan, toss broccoli, squash and onions with olive oil, salt and pepper, to taste.
3. Spread veggies out in an even layer and roast for 20–25 minutes, or until crisp-tender.
4. Meanwhile, heat a medium skillet over medium-low heat and lightly spray with oil.
5. Add eggs, one at a time, leaving space between them. Season each with a pinch of salt and pepper; cover and cook until whites are just set and yolk is still runny.
6. To assemble, divide rice and roasted veggies evenly among four bowls. Top each with 1 oz (28 g) avocado, 1 egg and 1 tbsp (15 mL) pecans. Serve immediately.

Recipe adapted from [Skinnytaste.com](#)



## NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION | Recipe images do now show exact recipe.

Honey Sriracha Chicken and Broccoli Bowls (per svg):		Za’atar Roasted Carrot and Chickpea Yogurt Bowls (per svg):		Shrimp Fajita Bowls (per svg):		Buddha Bowl (per svg):	
Calories	428	Calories	332	Calories	431	Calories	372
Protein	44 g	Protein	18.5 g	Protein	26 g	Protein	13 g
Fat	9.5 g	Fat	13 g	Fat	13.5 g	Fat	18.5 g
Saturated Fat	2 g	Saturated Fat	2.5 g	Saturated Fat	2 g	Saturated Fat	3.5 g
Cholesterol	124 mg	Cholesterol	14 mg	Cholesterol	136 mg	Cholesterol	186 mg
Carbohydrate	41 g	Carbohydrate	38 g	Carbohydrate	51 g	Carbohydrate	43 g
Fibre	4 g	Fibre	7 g	Fibre	8 g	Fibre	8 g
Sugars	12 g	Sugars	12 g	Sugars	6 g	Sugars	4 g
Sodium	570 mg	Sodium	626 mg	Sodium	690 mg	Sodium	458 mg



# Is this normal? Memory loss and aging.

by Susan Evans

Most of us have experienced moments of forgetfulness—not being able to remember a name, where the car is parked or what we were supposed to pick up at the grocery store. When we’re 20, we laugh it off but as we get older we might wonder if this is the sign of something more serious—like dementia.



## IS IT NORMAL AGING...OR SOMETHING ELSE?

The Alzheimer Society has developed a list of warning signs that indicate when you should talk to your doctor:

**It’s normal to forget things now and then.** A person with Alzheimer’s disease might forget things more often or may have difficulty recalling information that has recently been learned.

**Busy people can be distracted and lose track of tasks.** Difficulty performing basic tasks may be a warning sign.

**Everyone has trouble finding the right word sometimes.** A person with Alzheimer’s disease may forget simple words or substitute words, making sentences difficult to understand.

**It’s normal to forget the day of the week or your destination momentarily.** It’s not normal to not know where you are or how you got there.

**We all put things off or make the wrong choice occasionally.** Signs of poor or decreased judgement like not recognizing medical problems or

wearing heavy clothing on a hot day could be signs of a problem.

**Anyone can temporarily misplace a wallet or keys.** A person with Alzheimer’s may put things in incorrect places, like an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

**Everyone becomes sad or moody from time to time.** A person with Alzheimer’s can exhibit varied mood swings for no apparent reason.

**People’s personalities change with age.** Alzheimer’s disease may cause a person to act out of character—becoming confused, suspicious, fearful or withdrawn.

**It’s normal to tire of your routine, but most people regain their initiative.** A person with Alzheimer’s may become passive and require cues and prompting to become involved.

[www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca)

“Remembering and forgetting are perfectly normal parts of everyday life,” says Dr. Marilyn Malone, Geriatrician with Island Health. “Older adults have more memories to search through to find the fact or piece of information they’re looking for. As we go through life, our brain becomes crowded with memories and data and that can slow down the process of retrieving information.”

It’s true that we can often remember details from our childhood with vivid clarity while we can’t remember what we had for lunch yesterday. When we make memories when we are young, we pay a great deal of attention and the memories laid down are rich with details. Then, as we lay down new memories we reflect on the older memories and so the older memories are enforced.

But as we get older our brains become more selective in what it remembers—lunch yesterday might not make the cut.

“Occasional forgetfulness that is not sustained could be the result of a number of factors,” says Malone. “Your brain function and memory can be affected by health issues and as we age, we tend to have more health-related things going on.”

It might be that the person is going through a stressful or anxious time; it could be related to alcohol consumption or certain medications. Memory loss can also be the result of lack of sleep or depression. Once these issues are resolved, generally memory function will improve.

The good news is that, regardless of age, we maintain the ability to think

and to learn. “You can teach an ‘old dog’ new tricks and in fact, many people live into their 90’s and beyond without cognitive impairment,” notes Malone. “Although it may take longer for the ‘old dog’ to learn new information and to access it later.”

There are many things we can do to promote brain health and enhance memory function. The key is to be active mentally and physically every day and to stay engaged in life.

“We know that aging does not equal dementia. Some memory loss may be a normal part of aging but there are things we can do to protect and enhance memory,” says Malone. “The reassuring news is that not every lost set of car keys is a sign of an imminent decline into dementia.”

## WAYS TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BRAIN

### GET PHYSICAL

One of the most important ways to keep your brain healthy is through regular physical activity. Exercise that gets your heart pumping delivers oxygen-rich blood to the brain. Health Canada recommends 150 minutes of physical activity a week—good for your body, your heart and your brain.

### PRIORITIZE SLEEP

Sleep plays an important role in helping you fuse your memories so you can recall them down the road. Make getting enough sleep a priority. Most adults need seven to eight hours of sleep a day.

### MEDICATION REVIEW

There are a number of prescribed and over-the-counter medications that impact memory. Talk to your family doctor or pharmacist to find out whether the medicine you’re taking is impacting your memory.

### STAY SOCIAL

Keep up with your friends and join local social groups. Studies have shown that those who maintain social contact, do significantly better in memory and concentration tests.

### ALCOHOL INTAKE

Alcohol can impair memory. If you are experiencing memory loss and consume alcohol, talk to your family doctor about what’s right for you.

### DEVELOP A SYSTEM

Instead of using your mental energy to remember your next doctor’s appointment or where you put your glasses, make these things easier to remember by writing yourself a note and use a calendar; designate a place for your keys, glasses, purse and wallet. This way, you won’t waste time and energy on these ongoing memory chores.

### USE IT OR LOSE IT

Many people have jobs that keep them mentally active. Pursuing a hobby or learning a new skill can also have the same effect. Building and preserving brain connections is an ongoing process, so make lifelong learning a priority.





# LIGHTING THE PATH TO END-OF-LIFE CARE

by Audrey Larson

**James Spack recalls milestones in his daughter Sydney's life in high definition:** her swift footwork on the field, the goals she triumphantly drove home and the way she celebrated with her soccer and field hockey teammates. He reflected on family trips they took when she was young, visiting China, England, Ireland and Jersey Channel Islands, which sparked her sense of adventure, leading her to Asia and Australia on a solo journey that had been her dream for many years.

He talks about hearing how she had met her soulmate Darragh while traveling in Cambodia, and ending up living

in Sydney, Australia. And the Christmas trip they took to Ireland to meet his family after a year together. He shared these and many more stories at Sydney's Celebration of Life picnic held in August after her brief yet arduous journey with cancer at just 29 years old.

On a sunny fall day in Victoria, James shared a deeply moving and vivid personal story about his daughter's care journey, from her diagnosis to treatments through to the end of her life. He explained some of the challenges they faced as well as the unexpected gifts of kindness and compassion Sydney received from the staff working on the

palliative care unit at Royal Jubilee Hospital and at Victoria Hospice.

James hopes sharing his family's care journey will ease the fear and mystery about palliative and end-of-life care for patients and caregivers finding themselves on a similar path.

Sydney began feeling unwell while living and working abroad in Australia in early 2019. Diagnosed with cervical cancer and scheduled for radiation treatments, she returned to Canada and moved home with James and his wife, Mary. "From the beginning, she never doubted she'd be returning to her life in Australia and to her partner Darragh," says James. After her first treatment, she started chemotherapy after the cancer metastasis. "When her results continued to come back with increasingly serious results, I don't think she was ready to hear it; she had no point of reference that would have allowed her to accept the severity of this type of news at her age."

After managing at home for a time, several trips to emergency and an extended stay in the hospital made it clear that Sydney needed to be admitted to the Victoria Hospice in the Richmond Pavilion at Royal Jubilee Hospital where they could help her manage her complex symptoms and pain. "I know she didn't want to go, but once she was there, she had the care she truly needed and she felt comfortable," says James. "It was hard for her to be moving to a place where people were dying when all she wanted was to get better and live many more years."

"Patients and their loved ones experience a variety of emotions when they arrive in a hospice setting," notes Dr. Amy Tan, Medical Director of Victoria Hospice. "Whether they are experiencing fear or sadness, relief, grief, guilt and everything in between, we are here to make sure everyone feels as comfortable as possible and work through these emotions."

In hospice, the furnishings and lighting are more home-like, less clinical, and the pace is decidedly different than

an acute hospital ward. Due to complications and the need for post-surgery care, Sydney's end-of-life care took place in acute care at Royal Jubilee Hospital with the support of the palliative care team where James says that "she finally acknowledged the extent of her condition and calmly drifted into a peaceful, life-ending sleep. Her beloved family including Darragh, the love of her life, were at her side."

According to Jill Gerke, Island Health's Director for Palliative and End-of-Life Care, having dedicated hospice spaces across Vancouver Island has been a key priority for Island Health. "Over this last year in particular, through partnerships with local community hospice organizations, we have been able to increase the options for specialized end-of-life care for patients and their families through the increase of hospice beds in Victoria Hospice and the new Cowichan Hospice House in Duncan," notes Gerke. "The ultimate goal of hospice palliative care is to provide a refuge where patients and families can focus on being together through to end-of-life, with the support of specialized care teams and volunteers."

"Palliative and end-of-life care providers have something special that lets them know exactly what you need, before you know for yourself," says James. "They are uniquely kind and caring individuals who provide understanding, peace and compassion that keeps the dignity of dying in the hands of the person and the family, and they don't stop."

Dr. Jody Anderson, Medical Director for the program at Island Health, says quality end-of-life care doesn't just address the patient's care needs; it addresses the fundamental need of families to know that their loved ones are safe and comfortable, and not in pain.

"Our palliative care teams are well aware that when someone has a life-limiting illness, it can be overwhelming for the patient and their loved ones," says Anderson. "Our role is to provide practical support to all involved to help them navigate one of the most difficult

experiences of their lives, as painlessly as possible. It is a privilege to care for patients and their (chosen) families at this time."

James agrees. "My greatest fear, after accepting the inevitable, was wondering what palliative and hospice care would be like for Sydney," he says. "Without these care teams, this would have been a difficult time for us. We were touched by their genuine and truly amazing dedication, which helped Sydney and our family find peace and calm in her final days."

He adds that "People should not fear what they think these words represent, but should instead know that those who work there deliver endless amounts of comfort, care and love with a heartfelt passion for helping their patients. I know now that our brave and loving daughter, sister and partner, Sydney, was in a wonderful place for her final days of life."

Hoping Sydney would make it to the next treatment, James had signed on to a waiting list for a care dog to support Sydney. News of the pup's birth came within days of Sydney's passing, in what James describes as a ray of light at the end of a dark tunnel. He and his wife proceeded with the adoption and brought home a bouncy, black Wheaten Terrier/Poodle named Dylan in September. "We feel like a hole in our hearts is being filled. He is most loving and affectionate and he lifts our daily spirits with his playful antics. I believe he has her spirit in his wee soul."



## DEFINITIONS OF PALLIATIVE AND HOSPICE CARE

**PALLIATIVE CARE** is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients—both adults and children—and their families who are facing problems associated with serious and/or life-limiting illness. It prevents and relieves suffering through the early identification, correct assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual. Palliative care uses a team approach to support patients and their caregivers. It offers a support system to help patients live as actively as possible until death. [www.virtualhospice.ca/en\\_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/Topics/Topics/What+Is+Palliative+Care\\_/What+Is+Palliative+Care\\_.aspx](http://www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/Topics/Topics/What+Is+Palliative+Care_/What+Is+Palliative+Care_.aspx)

**HOSPICE CARE** (sometimes known as "hospice palliative care") is whole-person care that lies within palliative care for those at the end stage of a life-limiting illness, when life expectancy is weeks to short months. An interdisciplinary team that includes specially trained hospice volunteers provides clinical care and comfort, addressing specific physical, psychological, social, spiritual and practical issues with a focus on quality of life through to death and into bereavement for the families.

Both palliative care and hospice care are offered by specialized teams in hospital, long-term care, hospice settings and in an individual's home.

For more info: [www.island-health.ca/learn-about-health/end-of-life-care-hospice](http://www.island-health.ca/learn-about-health/end-of-life-care-hospice)





Sam Franey



# A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS: ISLAND HEALTH SUPPORTS A PIONEERING PROJECT THAT DELVES INTO THE HUMANITY OF THE OPIOID CRISIS

by Glenn Drexhage

When Sam Franey lived on the streets, he felt invisible.

“It always felt like nobody ever cared about your story, and about your dreams and your hopes,” says the soft-spoken Franey, who was homeless for more than four years before coming to the Comox Valley. “You end up not telling your story; you don’t think your voice is going to be heard. And that kind of limits where you can go in life.”

Now, in the midst of a devastating opioid crisis, a groundbreaking project that combines art, storytelling and advocacy has lent a voice to the voiceless—a “truly empowering” outcome, according to Franey. “It’s wicked to know that my life and my experiences are being heard and respected,” he says. “For once I’m finally starting to be happy with myself, and with the

future that’s in front of me and the opportunities that I have.”

The community-based research project, called *Walk With Me*, is led by the Comox Valley Art Gallery (CVAG) in partnership with Thompson Rivers University and AVI Health and Community Services. It’s supported in part by Island Health’s Community Wellness Granting Program, an initiative that offers one-time funding for projects to support the health and wellbeing of those living on Vancouver Island.

Since it launched in 2017, more than \$2.7 million in Community Wellness Grants have been awarded to innovative and inspiring community projects, such as the CVAG initiative. The project involves about 50 participants—people with lived experience, frontline care workers, artists, an Elder and more—whose collective effort has, as the gallery puts it, uncovered the human dimensions of the overdose crisis.

*“Walk With Me involves a physical walking journey that’s connected to an audio journey.”*

## DEEP STORYTELLING AND AUDIO JOURNEYS

Sharon Karsten, the project’s founder and CVAG’s Development/Research Officer, is blunt when asked what inspired her vision for *Walk With Me*. “Deaths. The number of deaths that are happening provincially is astronomical,” she says.

According to the BC Coroner’s Service, there were 1,716 suspected illicit drug

toxicity deaths in the province in 2020—a 74% increase over the previous year. “At some point, I asked, ‘What can the gallery do? What can be done?’” recalls Karsten. “And starting a conversation seemed like a good kind of beginning.”

Since 2019, when CVAG received the Island Health grant, that conversation has evolved to incorporate a technique known as cultural mapping. “The way I see it is deep storytelling,” says Karsten.

“You’re unearthing or mapping personal stories, lived-experience stories—and also stories sometimes in relation to place—that you wouldn’t see appear in a normal topographical map.”

This process involved the group meeting regularly to share stories through drawing, photography and audio recordings. Work proceeded nicely—and then COVID-19 hit. However, while the pandemic temporarily halted the project, it also helped lead to the development of audio walks, a crucial feature.

“[*Walk With Me*] involves a physical walking journey that’s connected to an audio journey,” says Karsten. “So people will have headphones on

*“The opportunity to put on some headphones and silence out the rest of the world allowed for more of an intimate connection to those stories, and a sense of being told them directly,”*



*“Walk With Me has created a safe space for people to come to and connect. It’s been really incredible to see—being a part of all the partnerships that have been built.”*

and be enabled to walk through the city, through parks, to stop in various locations, and to allow the stories that they hear to wash over them.” (The audio walks can also be streamed at [culturalmapping.ca](http://culturalmapping.ca).)

The result is a highly personal, immersive experience that transcends grim headlines and statistics. “The opportunity to put on some headphones and silence out the rest of the world allowed for more of an intimate connection to those stories, and a sense of being told them directly,” says Stephanie McCune, an Island Health manager who has worked with underserved and vulnerable populations for years.

McCune was one of many who attended the *Walk With Me* exhibition, which CVAG presented in fall 2020. Artworks

from participants were featured inside the gallery space. Some attendees participated in the audio walks several times, while others treated the exercise as part of their recovery process.

“This is beyond medical institutions, beyond one specific lens through which to see and understand,” says McCune. “This is a response that requires many hands, many hearts, many perspectives.”

Accordingly, Indigenous perspectives are a key part of *Walk With Me*. “It’s very important that Indigenous voices are represented in the response to the overdose crisis, because we are over-represented in the fatalities and the overdoses as a population,” says Patti Alvarado, a member of *Walk With Me*’s advisory team.

“We’ve been experiencing this crisis and all the underlying causes for generations—so it’s very emotional and very impactful,” notes Alvarado, also the Program Director of Unbroken Chain, a harm reduction program that’s part of the Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society. “[*Walk With Me*] has created a safe space for people to come to and connect. It’s been really incredible to see—being a part of all the partnerships that have been built.”

#### HOPE AND ACTION

Franey, who serves as a peer advisor for *Walk With Me*, has been transformed by the project. His voice is one of many featured in the audio walks, and he shares touching, harrowing details of struggles with depression, addiction and homelessness.

Hope, too, is part of Franey’s contribution—hope in the form of a startup he’s founded that was highlighted as part of *Walk With Me*. The registered non-profit—dubbed the Comox Valley Unhoused Society—aims to develop programs for the homeless and vulnerably housed, and those struggling with mental health and substance use issues. Housing will be provided by a community of “tiny houses” that participants build together, bolstered by a range of supports tailored for each person’s particular needs.

“You help them in whatever positive direction they want to build their life,” says Franey. “You just support them as best as you can. And they’re in a community that’s like-minded and supports one another.”

This is one example of action resulting from *Walk With Me*—and Karsten is keen to see more change moving forward. “It’s about taking this big idea of the overdose crisis and making it human...to make a shift that needs to happen,” she says. “Our hope is to change policy so that the human dimensions of the crisis become evident to people who hold power.”

Karsten also highlights the impact of Island Health’s support. “The Community Wellness Grant enabled us to start this project,” she says, adding that it also helped foster additional funding from the Vancouver Foundation and the BC Arts Council. “It was kind of a snowball effect.”

As a result, the work that culminated in *Walk With Me* has now evolved into a

multi-year project. One of the next steps includes a policy paper that outlines recommendations from project participants, which will be shared with key decision-makers. A podcast and website are planned, and the project team will regroup after engaging with the community to chart the path ahead.

“We’ve got to use the momentum that we’re creating from this and look forward into the future,” says Franey. “How can we carry these people’s stories forward and make some of that effective change and get some help for these people—instead of just letting their voice fade into nothing again.”

For more on the *Island Health’s Community Wellness Granting Program*, please visit [communitygrants.island-health.ca](http://communitygrants.island-health.ca)

*“You help them in whatever positive direction they want to build their life. You just support them as best as you can. And they’re in a community that’s like-minded and supports one another.”*

Sharon Karsten



Patti Alvarado





# COVID-19 CLINICAL TRIALS NANAIMO REGIONAL GENERAL HOSPITAL BUILDS CAPACITY

by Andrea Zeelie-Varga

Last spring, Island Health joined a number of global and national research trials offering hospitalized COVID-19 patients early access to COVID-19 treatments. Island Health's clinical research unit and clinician-researchers, based at Royal Jubilee Hospital (RJH), quickly pivoted to ensure that clinical trials were integrated into care options upon hospitalization. To ensure equity of access to patients across the Island the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH) was also mobilized as a COVID-19 clinical trial site.

Nanaimo's COVID-19 trial capacity was enabled through collaboration, learning and commitment to patient care. In coordination with intensivists in Victoria, two physicians, three ICU nurses, and a nurse with clinical trial expertise worked together with the support of the Victoria Clinical Trial Unit to complete the training and mobilize rapidly. Partially supported by COVID-19 research funding from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, the Research Office located at NRGH Room E0034 officially opened its doors in October 2020.

The team set up their research office with operational guidance, mentorship and staff training that occurred almost entirely remotely. In six short months, the NGRH research team has connected with study investigators, introduced the concept of clinical trials to patients in the Mid and North Island, and successfully integrated clinical research into care.

Clinical trials allow researchers to evaluate if a new treatment (such as a drug or medical device) is safe and effective. Hospitals that enable patients to consider trial participation enables

access to new, potentially life-saving investigational treatments. In the case of COVID-19, with no known cure, offering patients an opportunity to consent to participate in clinical trials is extremely valuable—and equitable access to these trials irrespective of geographic location is essential.

“The pandemic has brought significant uncertainty and we have continually been seeking ways of trialling new opportunities and care regimes,” says Damian Lange, Director of Clinical Operations at NRGH, “The clinical

teams, including our physician partners, have been extremely engaged and energized to be a part of these trials. Knowing NRGH has been one of the two COVID cohort sites for Island Health, we really have an opportunity to leverage our role and expertise in order to improve care for those with COVID-19.”

The clinical research nurses have been working hard to increase study participation in trials by building up networks and positive relationships at the grassroots level. In alignment with Island Health's vision and values, the Research department at Island Health aims to achieve excellence in knowledge and innovation in care, by fostering a culture and practices that promote equity, diversity and inclusion. Equity of access to clinical trials falls within this commitment. The research itself also benefits from increased participation, “Increasing diversity of study participants will only strengthen the evidence gained from clinical trials,” says Andrea Cameron, Clinical Research Nurse at NGRH.

Like Royal Jubilee Hospital, NRGH is currently enrolling participants in Canadian Treatments for COVID-19 (CATCO), a study investigating the safety and efficacy of different medications (compared to standard care) in improving mortality of patients hospitalized with COVID-19. CATCO is the Canadian branch of the global SOLIDARITY trial, operated by the World Health Organization. Another COVID-19 trial is getting off the ground, with enrollment likely to begin in the spring. The team is being deliberate in study selection, ensuring that opportunities fit with population needs and investigator interest, and have the appropriate resourcing to operate.

Island Health leadership, clinicians and hospital staff have worked together to enable the COVID-19 trials in Nanaimo. The team has already

added a non-COVID-19 study in critical care medicine to its portfolio to continue to build capacity during the pandemic and beyond.

“Island Health Clinical Research has been contributing to the knowledge base that is helping to define the standard of care for treating hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in the Province of British Columbia,” says Sheilah Frost, Manager of Clinical Research. “The Clinical Trials Unit has been supporting COVID-19 patients up and down the Island, as well as in Northern B.C.”

Given the increased COVID-19 activity on the Island, patients and families will be encouraged to know that options for groundbreaking medicine are available in their community. This crucial investment will help researchers understand the virus and respond to the present crisis, while also offering new treatments and health security to communities in the mid-Island, now and in the future.

Lange shares, “As leaders in our community and with the trust that the public places upon us, we have a role to continually improve care for our communities. It is an honour to be a part of these exciting research and innovation trials and we look forward to their outcomes and how we can continue to adapt in the evolution of the pandemic.”

To learn more about Island Health's involvement in COVID-19 research, please join us for Five Days in May. Island Health's flagship health research month is designed to educate, inform, inspire and stimulate. Five Days in May brings together researchers and students, patients and healthcare providers, decision-makers and members of the public to share ideas and spark innovation. To learn more about this year's series, please visit: [www.island-health.ca/research-capacity-building/five-days-may](http://www.island-health.ca/research-capacity-building/five-days-may)

## ISLAND HEALTH IS INVOLVED WITH THE FOLLOWING COVID-19 CLINICAL TRIALS:

The **Antithrombotic Therapy to Ameliorate Complications of COVID-19 (ATTACC)** study sought to reduce the risk of blood clot formation in COVID-19 patients. Enrollment has closed, and results are to be determined. Island Health enrolled one participant.

The **CONvalescent Plasma for Hospitalized Adults with COVID-19 Respiratory Illness (CONCOR-1)** study treated hospitalized patients with convalescent plasma from people who have already recovered from COVID-19. Enrollment has closed, and results are to be determined. Island Health enrolled two participants.

The **Canadian Treatment of COVID-19 (CATCO)** study is the Canadian arm of the global SOLIDARITY trial, in collaboration with countries around the world through the World Health Organization. This study compares different drug treatments for patients hospitalized with COVID-19. To date, Island Health has enrolled eight participants in Victoria and 12 in Nanaimo.

**Host Response Mediators in Coronavirus Infection (ARBs CORONA II)** is testing whether or not a drug used to treat high blood pressure can reduce organ injury and mortality associated with COVID-19 infection. Enrollment is set to begin soon.

## ISLAND HEALTH IS ALSO SUPPORTING THE FOLLOWING GLOBAL REGISTRY:

The **Short PeRiod Incidence sTudy of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SPRINT-SARI)** is an international observational study of patients in participating hospitals and intensive care units with severe acute respiratory infection (SARI). The study aims to establish a research response capability for possible future pandemics. To date, Island Health has enrolled 42 participants.



# MyHealth

Access to your health information 24/7

## WHAT IS MYHEALTH?

MyHealth is a secure website that gives you convenient, 24/7 access to your personal health information from anywhere with an internet connection. Through MyHealth, you can access Island Health laboratory results, medical imaging results, and outpatient appointments that are booked through Island Health's electronic health record scheduling application. MyHealth empowers patients to actively participate in their care journey by providing patients with secure, online access to their own personal health information.



## WHAT IS AN ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD (EHR)?

Island Health has been working on the development of an integrated EHR for a number of years. An EHR is a single, high-quality record of a patient's health history, current health status and health plans across all Island Health care services. An EHR ensures health-care providers have the most complete patient information possible to inform their decision-making and benefits patients through improved quality, safety and timeliness of care. MyHealth empowers patients with their own view into the EHR and to have access to a subset of their personal data. It allows the users to take ownership of their health and participate actively in the health-care system.

## HOW DO I ENROLL IN MYHEALTH?

To enroll in MyHealth, you must have received services from an Island Health location.

### 1. ENROLL ONLINE

Visit [www.islandhealth.ca/myhealth](http://www.islandhealth.ca/myhealth) to enroll online. Online MyHealth enrollment requires verification of your identity with Citizen Services

using BC Services Card. Have your valid photo BC Services Card available.

### 2. ENROLL BY PHONE

Call the MyHealth Virtual Enrollment Line at 1-844-844-2219, available Monday to Friday from 8:30am – 4:30pm. Please have your valid BC Services Card or Care Card ready.

### 3. ENROLL IN-PERSON

Enroll in person at the central admitting desk of any of our main hospitals. You may also request to enroll in MyHealth during your Island Health medical imaging or outpatient laboratory appointment.

## IS MYHEALTH THE ONLY WAY I CAN ACCESS MYHEALTH RECORD?

No. Existing Health Records request processes are still available for patients to obtain access to information that is not available in MyHealth. While MyHealth supplements existing processes, it does not replace them.

## DO I HAVE TO PAY A FEE TO REGISTER OR USE MYHEALTH?

No. There is no cost to register or use MyHealth.

## ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO USING MYHEALTH?

You may see results before your health-care provider has a chance to review and discuss the significance of them with you. To reduce this risk, MyHealth has a 7-day publishing delay for more potentially sensitive results (i.e. medical imaging and pathology results), meaning that you will see these results 7 days after they are available to your health-care provider in Island Health's EHR.

## DO I NEED ANY SPECIAL EQUIPMENT TO USE MYHEALTH?

No. MyHealth is designed to be very easy to use. You do not have to download or install any programs. You simply need to log on to MyHealth with your username (email address) and password. You can access your MyHealth account from any computer or smartphone with an internet connection.

## HOW DO I KNOW WHEN A NEW RESULT IS AVAILABLE IN MYHEALTH?

MyHealth currently does not have the ability to send a notification when results or information has been added

to your MyHealth. Currently, the only way to know if something new has been added is to log in.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY?

Always call 911 in an emergency. MyHealth is not a replacement for your health-care team.

## HOW DO I CANCEL MY MYHEALTH ACCOUNT?

Call the MyHealth Help Desk at 1-800-249-1024 (toll free), which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if you want to cancel your account.

## WHERE IS MYHEALTH DATA STORED?

All MyHealth data is stored within Canada except for the calls to the MyHealth Help Desk; these calls are recorded and stored outside of the country. Should you require the support of the MyHealth Help Desk, you will be asked to provide certain Personal Information that will be used to validate your identity and to track and monitor the support call. This information will be collected and stored by Cerner Corporation (contracted to operate the Help Desk) outside Canada. Specifically, your full

name, phone number, email address, date of birth and any further information you voluntarily supply to the Support Desk will be collected and stored outside Canada by Cerner.

## HOW IS MY PERSONAL INFORMATION COLLECTED?

Island Health takes privacy very seriously and collects only the personal information necessary when enrolling you for MyHealth. This information is collected under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act of BC (FIPPA) and includes personally identifiable information such as your first name, last name, date of birth, sex, and personal health number (PHN), which are used to positively identify you in Island Health's electronic health record system. Your email address and a challenge question and answer will also be collected so that an automated MyHealth invitation email can be sent to you and used by you to complete your account setup.

## WHAT SECURITY SAFEGUARDS DOES ISLAND HEALTH HAVE IN PLACE?

Island Health is obligated to protect your personal information by ensuring reasonable security provisions are in place

against risks such as unauthorized access, collection, use, disclosure or disposal.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO ENSURE MY MYHEALTH INFORMATION REMAINS SECURE?

Keep your MyHealth user ID and passwords in a secure place and do not share these details with anyone. If you choose to download or print results and reports from your personal health record through MyHealth, you are responsible for ensuring appropriate security of your personal information. Accessing MyHealth from publicly accessible devices or networks (such as Internet café kiosks and other public Internet access points) is a security risk and is not recommended. Accessing personal health records in public areas where others can easily view your computer screen is also not recommended.

## WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO END MY MYHEALTH SESSIONS?

To ensure that no one else can access your personal information, always use the Sign Out option, located on the bottom left-hand navigation panel, to end your MyHealth session.

For more information, additional resources and links about MyHealth visit [islandhealth.ca/myhealth](http://islandhealth.ca/myhealth)



# MyHealth

**A SECURE WEBSITE TO ACCESS YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION**  
for care and services provided by Island Health



**Get lab results, including  
COVID-19 test results**



**Access medical  
imaging reports**

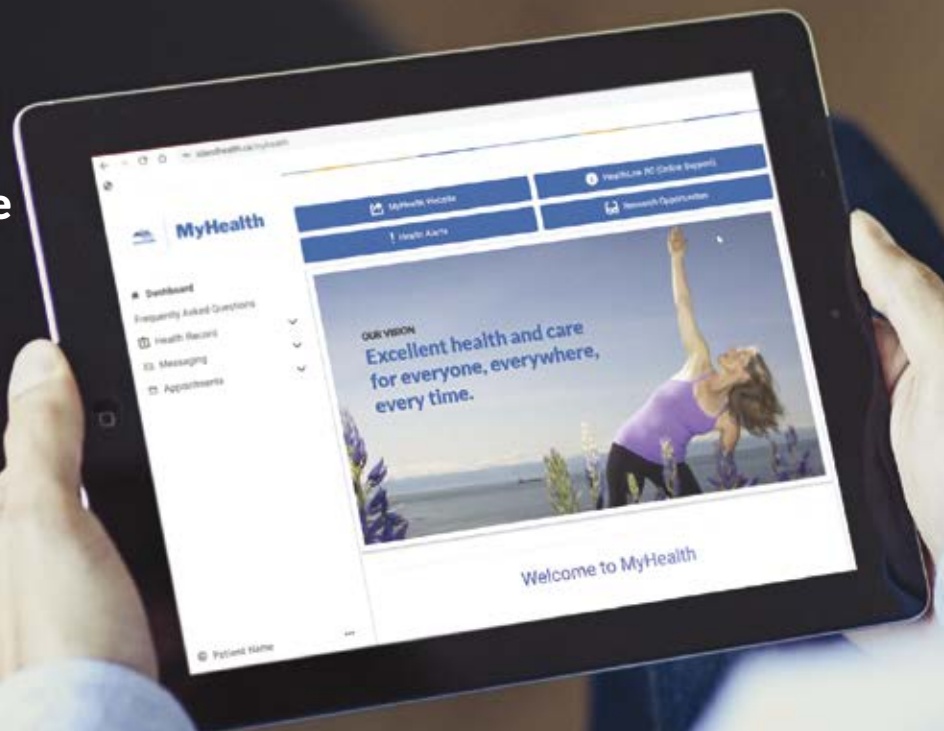


**View & schedule  
appointments\***



**View & receive  
messages with  
your care team\***

*\*Features available  
for select health-  
care services*



**ENROLL**

**Phone:** 1 844 844 2219 M-F 8:30am-4:30pm

**Online:** [islandhealth.ca/myhealth](https://islandhealth.ca/myhealth)

**In-person:** Island Health Care Locations

