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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2008HSERV0104-001782  
Nov. 21, 2008

Ministry of Health Services

### **8-1-1 SERVICE MAKES ACCESSING HEALTH ADVICE EASIER**

BURNABY – Starting today, British Columbians can simply dial 8-1-1 to get 24/7 health information, medical advice and help navigating B.C.'s health-care system, announced Health Services Minister George Abbott.

“8-1-1 is the gateway to an expanded tele-health service called HealthLink BC,” said Abbott. “We’re meeting our throne speech commitment to ensure greater choice and access for patients, and building on several of our very successful services, such as BC NurseLine and Dial-A-Dietitian, to create the most comprehensive non-emergency health information service in Canada.”

The HealthLink BC service includes a new health system navigation service that is accessible via telephone or the Internet. The navigation system assists the public and health professionals in finding and accessing appropriate health resources in, or close, to their home communities.

“As part of the enhanced phone and web services, each health authority has designated individuals responsible for ensuring that HealthLink BC has the most up-to-date information on health resources for each region of the province,” added Abbott. “For example, our enhanced services will make it much simpler for a pregnant mother to determine the closest prenatal program to her home, or for a senior living in a rural community to locate an influenza immunization clinic.”

A trained health service representative will answer all 8-1-1 telephone calls, and where appropriate, calls will be transferred to a registered nurse, pharmacist or dietitian for further information and advice. The 8-1-1 service can provide assistance with answers to questions about a variety of health topics, help in identifying symptoms and advice on when to seek medical treatment.

8-1-1 has translation services available in over 130 languages and is one of several non-emergency services operated under the umbrella of HealthLink BC. Other HealthLink BC services include BC HealthGuide handbooks, BC HealthFiles, Dial-A-Dietitian, bcbedline and an interactive website, [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca).

The HealthLink BC website provides information on over 4,000 health topics, symptoms, and over-the-counter and prescription drugs and offers tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The site also offers an integrated search and mapping function to over 2,500 health services to help British Columbians find health services close to their home communities.

“While the HealthLink BC website provides a wealth of information on various health topics, including illnesses, it also empowers people with information on healthy living,” said Healthy Living and Sport Minister Mary Polak. “Eventually, we’ll work through this website to link people directly to community resources like recreation centres, bike paths and walkways so it’s even easier to make healthy choices.”

HealthLink BC services are endorsed by the British Columbia Medical Association, the BC College of Family Physicians, the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia and the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia.

British Columbians who are hearing or speech impaired are able to access HealthLink BC telephone services from a TTY service or device by dialing 7-1-1.

“The 8-1-1 telephone service and HealthLink BC website are excellent resources for patients and health-care providers across B.C.,” said Dr. Shamin Jetha, president of the BC College of Family Physicians. “Not only will these services provide health information and advice to British Columbians and support them in finding appropriate health resources close to home, but these services will also assist health professionals in ensuring that their patients receive the very best care.”

As part of its 8-1-1 service, HealthLink BC will soon be able to better support chronic disease patients, homecare and palliative services and will work with the BC Medical Association to establish a limited specialist referral service. Pilots of these expanded services will get underway within the next two years.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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## BACKGROUND

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### HEALTHLINK BC SERVICES

#### 8-1-1

The 8-1-1 telephone service offers a new point of access for the existing BC NurseLine service and provides British Columbians with free, 24-hour, confidential health information and advice on a variety of health topics and medical procedures. A trained health services navigation team answers all calls and if appropriate, calls may be transferred to a registered nurse, dietitian or pharmacist for further information.

Pharmacists are available between 5 p.m. and 9 a.m. daily and dietitians between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

8-1-1 also offers a health system navigation system to assist the public and health-care professionals in finding and accessing appropriate health resources in or close to their home communities.

#### HealthLinkBC.ca

HealthLinkBC.ca offers medically approved information on over 4,000 health topics in a searchable database and also provides information on over-the-counter and prescription drugs through a comprehensive medication library. The website includes an integrated search and mapping function to over 2,500 health services to assist British Columbians in finding services close to their home communities.

[www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) also provides information on all other HealthLink BC services.

#### BC HealthGuide Handbook

The BC HealthGuide is a 400-plus-page handbook that covers over 200 health topics and includes information on how to recognize and manage common health concerns, tips on home treatment and when to see a doctor.

The handbook is currently available in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi. A BC First Nations Health Handbook companion guide to the BC HealthGuide Handbook is also available.

BC HealthGuide Handbooks are free to residents of British Columbia and available in local pharmacies and public health units across the province.

## **BC HealthFiles**

The BC HealthFiles are a series of over 200 fact sheets with B.C.-specific information on public health topics developed in collaboration with BC Centre for Disease Control and other agencies. Fact sheets are available free to residents and as a resource to health care professionals from HealthLinkBC.ca or public health units. A number of BC HealthFiles have been translated into other languages, including Chinese, Farsi, French, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.

## **Dial-A-Dietitian**

Dial-A-Dietitian's registered dietitians provide brief nutrition consultations by phone Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. If a caller requires more in-depth counselling, Dial-A-Dietitian will refer callers to hospital outpatient dietitians, community nutritionists or other nutrition services in their community.

## **bcbedline**

bcbedline is a 24/7 service that collaborates with physicians and health-care providers to ensure the safe, timely and cost effective transfer of acute and critically ill patients to a higher level of care both within and outside of B.C. bcbedline also provides a web-based provincial bed management system to assist physicians with the timely transfer of patients.

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## FACT SHEET

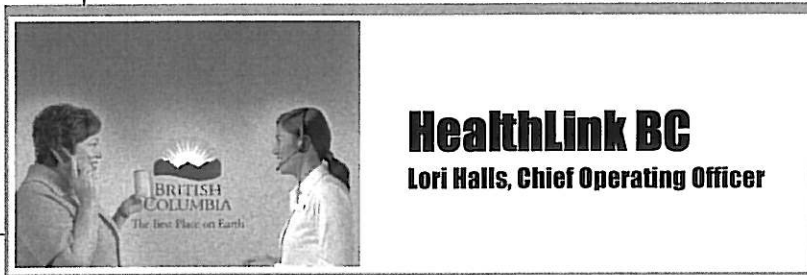
The Government of BC launched HealthLinkBC and 8-1-1 on November 21, 2008. This new service enables anyone in BC to call 8-1-1 for non-emergency health information and service referral, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

- HealthLinkBC also includes a new health system navigation service accessible by telephone or the Internet. The navigation system assists the public and health professionals in finding and accessing appropriate health resources in, or close, to their home communities.
- All 8-1-1 telephone calls will be answered by a trained health service representative and where appropriate, calls will be transferred to a registered nurse (24/7), pharmacist (5:00 pm – 9:00am everyday) or dietitian (9:00 – 5:00pm Monday – Friday) for further information and advice.
- 8-1-1 has translation services available in over 130 languages and is one of several non-emergency services operated under the umbrella of HealthLinkBC. Other HealthLinkBC services include BC HealthGuide handbooks, BC HealthFiles, Dial-A-Dietitian, bcbedline and an interactive website, [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)
- The HealthLinkBC website provides information on over 4,000 health topics, symptoms, over-the-counter and prescription drugs and offers tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The site also offers an integrated search and mapping function to over 2,500 health services to assist British Columbians find health services close to their home communities.
- The launch of 8-1-1 replaces the previous BCNurseLine brand and the previous 1-866-215-4700 number that will over a period of several years be phased out.
- From outside of British Columbia, BC residents can reach HealthLinkBC's telephone service by calling 604-215-8110.
- If you have any questions regarding HealthLinkBC and 8-1-1, please contact Kate Jobling, Manager, Marketing and Communications at 250-952-6463.



HealthLinkBC

Presentation for:  
Audience  
Meeting



March 30, 2009

## Imagine...

- Imagine --
  - Its 4:00 on a Sunday afternoon and your baby has had a high fever all day;
  - You are a senior living in a rural community and do not know where or when you can get your influenza shot;
  - You are not sure if you can take over-the-counter cold medication with your new prescription and the pharmacy is closed.
- Where can you go for the reliable information and advice you need?

## HealthLink BC

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- HealthLink BC is a service provided by the provincial government that provides health information to British Columbians through a variety of mediums to ensure that reliable medical advice is available to anyone, anytime.




HealthLinkBC

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## What Services Does HealthLink BC Offer?

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### Phone:

- Call 8-1-1  is an easy-to-remember three digit number for 24/7 access to non-emergency information.

### Web:

- HealthLinkBC.ca  is an interactive website with information on several health topics and over the counter and prescription drugs, as well as an interactive symptom finder.

### Print:

- BC HealthFiles  and BCHealthGuide 

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## HealthLink BC by Phone



- All 8-1-1 calls are answered by specially-trained health service representatives who will, where appropriate, transfer calls to a:
  - Registered Nurse;
  - Pharmacist; or
  - Dietitian
  - Assist you in wayfinding.
- Translation services are available in over 130 languages on request.
- For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY), call 7-1-1.

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## HealthLink BC's Goals

- Major goal is to provide patients with the tools they need to stay healthy and make the best health care decisions
- We want to encourage British Columbians to take charge of their own health and their family's health
- We want to allow British Columbians with non-emergency issues to have their questions answered fast, without having to spend hours waiting in clinics or doctor's offices

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## **Some Background on HealthLink BC**

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- Formerly known as HealthLines Services BC:
  - Incorporates BCNurseLine, the old Dial-A-Dietitian, BC NurseLine Pharmacist Services
  - New offerings include: 8-1-1, improved website and wayfinding
- Conversation on Health
- 2008 Throne Speech announced an expansion to BC NurseLine
- We gave them EVEN MORE

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## **We Need Your Help**

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- Tell your friends, family and loved ones about our service
- Explain that it's as easy as calling 8-1-1 or going online to get the help they need
- Try it!

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**Thank you...**

**Time for your questions...**



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## **Biography for Lori Halls**

Lori Halls has devoted her professional life to promoting and pursuing innovative health care in the province of BC. Her efforts have focused on empowering individuals with knowledge and information so that they can make the right health decisions for themselves and their families. From developing tobacco cessation programs to the introduction of 8-1-1, Lori has dedicated herself to 'pushing the bar' in healthcare.

Lori Halls is currently the Chief Operating Officer of HealthLink BC, a newly re-branded organization which provides non-emergency, medical information to BC residents -- 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Lori's vision of providing residents multiple access points via phone (8-1-1), via a website or through print resources, helped make HealthLink BC a reality in the province.

Formerly known as HealthLines Services BC, HealthLink BC falls under the Emergency Health Service Commission (EHSC) and amalgamates the well-respected BC NurseLine, Dial-A-Dietitian and Pharmacist-After-Hours services, along with other services and programs.

Prior to Lori's appointment to HealthLink BC, she was the Executive Director and Transition Lead of the BC HealthGuide Program at the Ministry of Health Services where she developed an innovative platform on which health system redesign initiatives such as: chronic disease management, primary healthcare and improved rural and remote access for BC residents were achieved. The BC HealthGuide Program is now one of the many services provided under HealthLink BC.

Lori also managed the province's Tobacco Control Branch which saw great success in the reduction of youth smoking rates in BC. Lori Halls is a Senior Executive at the EHSC and she currently sits on the Advisory Board of the Executive MBA Program in Healthcare at the Sauder School of Business. She also sits on various Steering Committees including the Hospice Palliative Care Telenursing Protocols and the BC 2-1-1 Committee.

As a career bureaucrat in the health care sector, Lori Halls has courageously advanced health practices in BC through the development of services that provide greater access to non-traditional healthcare services.

Lori has a Bachelors of Arts degree and a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Victoria. She resides in Victoria, BC, and is also a wife and mother of two small boys who are very involved in sports and other activities. She is, by all definitions, a devoted hockey mom.