

GOVERNMENT HEALTH RESOURCES

PROVINCIAL

British Columbia's main health authority is the **Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors**. They fund BC's health programs and watch over the activities of local health bodies like Regional Health Boards, Community Health Councils, and Community Health Services Societies. The Ministry is responsible for the BC Ambulance Service, Medical Services Plan & Pharmacare, and Vital Statistics. But the Ministry is not directly responsible for hospital and community health care services, immunizations, and specialized health services on a municipal level. If you would like information about government health programs and policy, go to their website at **www.hlth.gov.bc.ca**, or contact them through their **Health Information Line** at **1-800-465-4911**.

The **Health Files** are helpful fact-sheets about different health issues. Topics range from 'general diseases' to 'women's and children's health' to 'water and water-borne diseases'. The files are available to the public at all regional health authority offices (call the Ministry of Health for specific addresses), on the Ministry website at **www.health.gov.bc.ca/hlthfile**, or by telephone, through recorded messages which repeat if needed, at **660-2628**.

The **Women's Health Bureau** is part of the Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors. The Bureau acts as an advocate for women within the health care system. It works with government and community health groups to promote gender-sensitive provincial policies in the health care system. Write them at **BC Ministry of Health Planning, 5-2 1515 Blanshard Street, Victoria BC, V8W 3C8**, or call at **(250) 952-2256**.

The Ministry of Women's Equality no longer exists. In June 2001 the **Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services** was created in its place. The Ministry is responsible for areas like aboriginal services, community services for women and their families, prevention projects to end violence against women, immigration policy, and safety standards. Phone the ministry at **(250) 387-2283** or write at **P.O. Box 9041, Stn PROV GOVT, Victoria BC, V8W 9E1** if you have any questions or concerns.

Enquiry BC provides information about current provincial government programs and services. Call them at **660-2421**, Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm.

REGIONAL

The **Vancouver/Richmond Health Board** is one of five Regional Health Boards in BC. The Board is in charge of health care services in Vancouver and Richmond including hospital services, community health clinics and centers, continuing care services, and youth and seniors health services. Call them at **736-2033** for more information.

The **Regional Health Advocate** answers questions and concerns from the public about Health Board services and makes suggestions to the Board about policy changes. She also provides information about community resources and legal and human rights issues. You can contact the advocate at **736-2033**, or visit the office at 200-520 W. 6th Avenue, Vancouver.

Vancouver City Hall Information Centre is a phone information service that answers questions about municipal services and affairs. Call at **873-7415**. Information is available in other languages as well.

FEDERAL

Health Canada is a national department involved in health education and welfare. It works with provincial and territorial governments to help develop and enforce health policy and regulations. It also works with federal departments concerning health issues. Its goal is to promote health prevention and healthy living for all Canadians. Their **General Information Line** for the BC/Yukon region is **(604) 666-2083**, available Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4pm. Their website is at **www.hc-sc.gc.ca**.

The **Canadian Health Network** is sponsored by Health Canada and is an internet-based network of health information that encourages awareness and informed decisions about personal health care. The English-language website is at **www.canadian-health-network.ca**, and the French-language site is at **www.reseau-canadien-sante.ca**.

The **Office of the Ombudsman** is an independent office in the government that responds to questions and complaints about the practices and services of public bodies in Canada. If you feel that you have been badly treated by a public body, like a provincial ministry, a professional or occupational organization, or a hospital, the Ombudsman will investigate your complaint. She/he can try to work out solutions and suggest policy changes, but can't make or reverse decisions a public body has made. Send your questions and complaints to the Ombudsman of BC at **P.O. Box 9039 Stn PROV GOVT, Victoria BC, V8W 9A5**, or call the Office at **1-800-567-3247**.

