

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

As we head into our second week of intensive COVID-19 preparations, we would like to acknowledge the incredible job that our fellow physicians, fellow healthcare workers and other essential service providers have done this past week. Thank you for giving up your time and energy to help our community prepare for this pandemic and prevent COVID-19 infection and spread. Thank you for volunteering for jobs that will put you at greater risk. Thank you for coming together and encouraging and supporting our community as we face the coming storm together. We are proud to be associated with such an amazing group of strong, courageous, caring and giving people.

In the space of a week, physicians and staff have worked together to transform the hospital and our medical community in preparation for COVID-19. Our medical clinics have switched almost exclusively to virtual care to help protect our staff and patients. We have created a Respiratory Assessment Clinic with an associated outreach clinic to help ensure that only the patients who are most severely affected are seen in the Emergency Room. The Respiratory Assessment Clinic will also keep our regular clinics safe for our most vulnerable patients who do need to be seen in person.

At the hospital, we have instituted new protocols and procedures to ensure that our staff and patients are as safe as possible during this crisis. Our operating room has been reduced to emergency surgeries only and our recovery areas have been repurposed to provide additional inpatient beds. We have created a dedicated COVID-19 ward in order to help prevent COVID-19 infection from spreading to other areas of the hospital.

There is still much work to do in the little time that we have left and we know that we will have to adapt and learn as we go. We also know that we are lightyears ahead of where we were a week ago, and that we have given ourselves a fighting chance to help our community as much as we possibly can through this time.

We also want to extend a big thank you to everyone in the community who has sent words of support and encouragement, who has offered to help in any way possible, who has made huge sacrifices in their personal and professional lives to help our community prepare for COVID-19. It will likely be a very tough road ahead, but if we all continue to work together and support each other, we will get through it and come out the other side stronger than ever. **You are superheroes!**

As you are all aware, the number of known COVID-19 cases has continued to rise across our health region and across Canada, this despite the fact that we are now only testing a small subset of symptomatic patients. Current data would suggest that our curve is currently following that of Italy's and unless we take extreme measures now, we will not be able to contain it. **Wash your hands!**

To date, we have only talked about what may come in very general terms, but we think it is time to speak bluntly about the impact that COVID-19 may have on the Sunshine Coast. While the data coming in from around the world is incomplete, it does give us an idea of infection rates, the amount of time it takes for the number of infected patients to double, and how each age group will be affected. Because none of us have immunity to COVID-19, except for the few that have already had it and recovered, almost everyone who is exposed to it will get it. This means that of the approximately 30,000 people on the Coast, 27,000 of us will probably contract COVID-19 at some point. **Keep your distance!**



The vast majority (estimates suggest 80%) will have mild or even no symptoms at all, but a significant number will become more severely ill. Given our population demographics, that could be 5,000 people or more. Of that 5,000 a significant number will require medical care, including hospitalization for oxygen therapy or even life support and transfer to an ICU. **Self-isolate if you get sick!**

Based on world-wide data, it appears that the number of COVID-19 infected patients doubles approximately every five days if nothing is done. This means that the number of people with COVID-19 will double every five days if we don't take action now to prevent that. If we assume that we are a week or two behind North Vancouver, the entire Sunshine Coast would be infected in another 57 days (mid-May). **Stay home!**

At the same time, again assuming we are a week or two behind North Vancouver, this would mean that we presently have less than 100 people infected with COVID-19 on the Sunshine Coast. If we all act now, we still have a chance to contain COVID-19 and protect our family, friends and neighbours. **Order online or by phone!**

The reality is that it is very possible that we will lose hundreds of our community members in the coming months. We have the ability to save some of you who become severely ill, but only if we have the resources to do so. If we don't slow this down, there will be very little that we can do. Please do everything you can to prevent COVID-19 from spreading and help save the lives of those you care about! **Share this message!**

If you have recently returned to the Coast from abroad or elsewhere in Canada, please self-isolate for 14 days. If household members develop symptoms during that period, then they will also need to self-isolate for 14 days. Please refer to the BCCDC website for the latest guidelines: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

Starting tomorrow, if you develop new cold or flu symptoms severe enough to warrant assessment by a doctor, please call or text the Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252, or email us at coastrespclinic@gmail.com. If you develop mild symptoms, please self-isolate at home for 10 days from the onset of symptoms. If you are having trouble breathing and feel you may need to be hospitalized, call 911.

Please check the Coast Reporter and the Local Weekly websites regularly for updates on COVID-19 in our community, and tune in daily on Eastlink Community TV at 5:30, 7:30 and 10:00 PM. Also stay tuned to Coast FM for breaking news on COVID-19. Please visit the Gibsons, Sechelt and SCR D websites for daily updates regarding community services and our local response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keep well, wash your hands, keep your distance, and stay at home unless you have a medical emergency or another essential task!

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

-Dr Jennifer Baxter
-Dr Herman Mentz
-Dr Daren Spithoff

-Dr Ted Krickan
-Dr Brian Nelson