

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

The new year has brought some good news, as we have seen our local case numbers (people with symptoms who test positive for COVID-19) drop from an average of two per day in early December to less than one case per day over the past few weeks. This is a reflection of how careful most of us have been since the new public health orders came out in November and a good indication of how well we can do as a community if we continue to do everything we can to prevent COVID-19 from spreading. Thank you!

We are hopeful that our local trend will continue over the next few weeks, but given widespread reports of larger family gatherings and other high risk scenarios across the province, it is possible that we will see a bump in cases here on the Coast over the next few weeks as well.

Across BC, we did see a clear response to the [current public health orders](#) with a drop in the number of new cases per day through most of December. Unfortunately, and not unexpectedly, there has been an upward trend in the number of positive cases since the start of 2021. This appears mostly to be driven by family gatherings and other ill-advised social activities over the holidays.

As a result, and as most of you are probably aware, [the current public health orders](#) have been extended to February 5th. Please review the orders, to make sure that you are familiar with the current recommendations.

As per the current orders, you must wear a mask in any public indoor space; you can be fined \$230 if you do not comply. It is also crucial to avoid indoor and outdoor gatherings; please do not have anyone outside of your immediate household (or core bubble of up to two additional people outside your household) in your home or vehicle. This means no carpooling up to Dakota Ridge, and no backyard parties or playdates. Exceptions are made for carpooling kids to and from school, and going for walks, hikes, runs and other outdoor activities, provided that you do not hang out in a group before or after the activity. Please continue to avoid non-essential travel outside of our community and when in doubt, err on the side of caution.

On the vaccine front, we aim to start administering our first COVID-19 vaccines here on the Coast this week. As per the [national vaccination plan](#), our first priority will be to vaccinate our highest risk community members who live in our long term care facilities, as well as the frontline healthcare workers who work with them.

Once the first phase of vaccinations is complete, there will be a sequential rollout starting with those community members who are at highest risk, according to the provincial vaccine plan. This includes those 80 and over in the general community, and 65 and older in our First Nations communities, as well as others in higher risk settings. We hope that all of our higher risk groups will be vaccinated by the end of March.

Provided that there is adequate vaccine supply, everyone else in the community will start to be vaccinated once our highest risk groups have been vaccinated. Vaccinations for the general population will be distributed by age groups until everyone has been vaccinated. The current plans do not include vaccinations for children, as neither of the two approved vaccines have been approved for people under sixteen. Please check the BC CDC website for updates on [provincial vaccine distribution](#). We will update you as more information becomes available.

In the meantime, until we have achieved a sufficient level of immunity in our community through vaccination, we must continue with our current measures: it is only with each of us doing the best we can for ourselves, our family members, friends and neighbours that we will maintain the success that we have had so far. Please continue to take every precaution that you can: wear a mask, wash your hands frequently (especially after contacting high touch surfaces in public, and before and after touching your face or mask), and maintain physical distancing wherever possible.

Each and every one of us is tired of COVID-19 and like all of you, we would like nothing more than to get back to normal. Unfortunately, this is going to be a long process; we have to continue to be patient and kind with ourselves and others, and do everything we can to help until this pandemic is under control. If you feel like you need additional support or are having difficulty coping, please do not hesitate to reach out to your family doctor or a counsellor. There are many online support resources as well.

Although [criteria for COVID-19 testing](#) were revised recently, the same principles apply. It is vitally important that you stay home if you feel unwell. Symptoms that warrant immediate testing for COVID-19 include: fever, chills, new cough (or worsening of a chronic cough), difficulty breathing, or loss of sense of taste or smell. If you have two or more of the following symptoms for more than 24 hours, you should also arrange for testing: a sore throat, headache, extreme fatigue, diarrhea, loss of appetite, nausea or vomiting, and muscle aches.



School-aged children may be monitored at home for 24 hours if their symptoms are mild, but should be tested if their symptoms persist over 24 hours, or if their symptoms worsen. Please keep your child home from school, daycare or other activities if they have any symptoms that could be related to COVID-19.

If you meet [criteria for testing](#), please contact the Respiratory Assessment Clinic by phone or text at 604-740-1252, or by email at [coastrespclinic@gmail.com](mailto:coastrespclinic@gmail.com). The clinic remains open seven days a week from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

If you are awaiting assessment or test results, you must [self-isolate](#) at home, ideally in a separate space where you can limit contact with other members of your household. This means staying home from work, school, and all other activities until you have tested negative and your symptoms have resolved. If you test positive for COVID-19, you will have to continue self-isolating until you are cleared by Public Health.

If you have more severe symptoms and believe you may need to be admitted to hospital, please go to the Sechelt Hospital Emergency Department. If you need an ambulance, please call 911. Please remember that the Emergency Department remains open and safe for anyone with a medical emergency.

Keep well and please keep doing everything you can to keep our community safe!

Sincerely,

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

Dr Jennifer Baxter

Dr Ted Krickan

Dr Herman Mentz

Dr Brian Nelson

Dr Daren Spithoff