

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

I think we all breathed a little sigh of relief and felt a little spring in our step this past week; as almost all of our long term care residents and their healthcare workers received their first of two COVID-19 vaccinations. While this does not provide full protection, it does ensure that our most vulnerable community members have some protection from COVID-19. This is the first step towards a return to normal, and while we are still many months away from anything resembling life before COVID, it is nice to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

While we celebrated that good news, last week also reminded us that this pandemic is far from over. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, we saw a big bump in local cases, with nearly 20 people testing positive between January 11th and 15th. This appears to be the result of interactions over the holidays: family gatherings, social gatherings, off-Coast travel, and other activities that increase the risk of transmitting COVID-19. Please, please, please do everything you can over the next few weeks and months to prevent this from spreading further.

This past week also brought news of our first local school exposure to COVID-19, with a student at Elphinstone High School testing positive. While we have done well in keeping COVID-19 out of our schools so far, we all need to work together to prevent further infections and to ensure that our schools can remain open.

As a general rule, most students in the province who have been infected with COVID-19 were infected at home or during other non-school interactions. That being said, we would encourage all students to continue to follow their school's COVID-19 protocols to help minimize the risk of virus transmission at school.

With respect to school exposures, please remember that a brief or low risk contact means that you are very unlikely to contract COVID-19. Please just continue to practice the usual infection prevention measures and monitor for symptoms. You will not need to stay home from school or self-isolate unless you have had a prolonged close contact with an infected person and have been advised to self-isolate by Public Health.

This is also a good time to remind everyone that if you have any [COVID-19 symptoms](#), **please stay home and self isolate!** Do not go to work or school or other activities. Do not visit with friends. Don't take a taxi or the bus. Even if you don't feel really sick (most people won't), this is one of the keys to preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Please arrange for testing as soon as possible if you have any of the key COVID-19 symptoms: fever, chills, new cough (or worsening of a chronic cough), difficulty breathing, or loss of sense of taste or smell. You should also get tested if you have two or more of the following symptoms for more than 24 hours: a sore throat, headache, extreme fatigue, diarrhea, loss of appetite, nausea or vomiting, and muscle aches.

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.

While 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. You must continue to self-isolate 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

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Dr Ted Krickan  
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