

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

The last few weeks have been a very challenging phase of the pandemic for our community. Like many other places around the world, we have been hit hard by Omicron. Last month we were seeing up to 40 positive tests per day, while testing as many as 70 people per day. Fortunately, this has started to ease off a little bit, but it will likely be a few weeks yet before this wave subsides.

Thank you to all of you who are vaccinated and wear a mask in public indoor spaces, and who continue to take precautions to help protect our community. We are seeing first-hand the benefits of vaccination, with very few severe infections in our community among those who are vaccinated. We would be facing a very different scenario if we had similar infection rates and a low rate of vaccination; the vast majority of patients who are coming in with more severe illness (including children) have not been vaccinated, despite the fact that they represent a small percentage of our population.

The other factor that has been protective is that the Omicron variant presents much more like the common cold or flu, particularly for those who are fully vaccinated. Nasal/sinus congestion, a sore throat, or a headache may be the only symptoms that someone has. Please remain diligent in monitoring yourself and your family members for these symptoms, and please isolate at home if you develop any of these symptoms.

We know that this has been a confusing time for everyone, with rapidly changing testing criteria and self-isolation guidance. As we move through the next phases of the pandemic, we will no longer be providing regular updates, as we are shifting our focus back to our clinical responsibilities. We would encourage you to continue to refer to the [BCCDC website](#) to keep up to date with the most recent guidance.

As it currently stands, most people who develop COVID symptoms do not require a test. Only those who are at higher risk for developing more severe disease and would be eligible for treatment with either an infusion or pill to reduce their risk of admission to hospital/ICU are currently eligible for testing, as well as those who live or work in high-risk settings. A comprehensive list of those eligible for testing can be found on the [BCCDC website](#) as well.

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms and are unsure as to whether you qualify for testing, please visit the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#). If you meet criteria for testing, the Respiratory Assessment Centre remains open Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 3:30. Please phone or text us at 604-740-1252, or email us at [coastrespclinic@gmail.com](mailto:coastrespclinic@gmail.com).

If your symptoms are mild and you do not meet the criteria for a COVID test, you are advised to isolate until you no longer have a fever and feel well. Once you are fever-free and feeling better, you may return to work, school, child care, and other activities. Once you feel better, you are still advised to avoid large gatherings and to limit interactions with people who are at high-risk for severe COVID-19 infection (such as older loved ones) for 10 days from the start of your symptoms. This applies to adults who have been fully vaccinated and for children, regardless of their vaccination status.

If you have not yet received two doses of a COVID vaccine, you are advised to isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms if you are over the age of 18 and test positive for COVID-19.

Children under the age of 18 who test positive for COVID need only isolate for five days from the start of their symptoms, regardless of their vaccination status. If they are fever-free and feeling better after five days, they may return to school, child care, sports, and other activities.

Please remember that while the majority of those who develop symptoms of COVID infection will be able to manage their symptoms at home, some will have more severe symptoms that require medical attention. Please ensure that you reach out to your family physician, the Respiratory Assessment Clinic, or the Emergency Department if you are having difficulty managing your symptoms.

If you have not yet been vaccinated, please register at <https://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/> at 1-833-838-2323, or in person at any Service BC location. You are also welcome to drop in to any of our vaccination clinics for your first dose (appointments are required for second and third doses). Vaccinations remain available for everyone aged five and older, and we strongly encourage everyone to get vaccinated. Every person who is vaccinated helps to reduce the risk for everyone else and reduces their own risk of severe illness as well.

Keep well, stay positive, and keep doing everything you can to protect yourself and those around you.

Sincerely,

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

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