

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

We hope that you are all keeping well under the current restrictions and that despite the stress you are using this time to reconnect with yourselves and those around you. We continue to be encouraged and inspired by the many beautiful and creative ways that people in our community are supporting each other. Please continue to keep this spirit alive as we move forward; these will be the seeds of the community we want to be after all this is over, and the roots that will anchor us as we weather this storm.

We would like to say a special thank you to all the people who have posted online and physical signs of support for our amazing team of healthcare workers on the Coast. Thank you as well to the first responders and to the Coasters Car Club members for showing your support with drive-by siren/horn salutes. We appreciate all the ways (big and small) that people have been reaching out to support us. Thank you!

Thank you as well to everyone who is part of the larger healthcare team! From our hospital administrators, to Public Health, to Home and Community care, to housekeepers, stores and food services, to laboratory, pharmacy and radiology services, to physio and occupational therapy, and to all the nurses, care aides and physicians on the Coast, everyone has been working round the clock to prepare our hospital and our community for COVID-19. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

We are often asked about if and how many COVID-19 patients are currently in Sechelt Hospital. As per Public Health policy, this information is not currently being released and we cannot comment on specific numbers at this time.

We can say however, that COVID-19 is in communities and hospitals large and small across our region, our province and our nation. We have to continue to assume that COVID-19 is here on the Coast and actively spreading amongst any of us who are not practicing social distancing measures. We strongly encourage everyone to continue with these measures; wash your hands, stay home, maintain social distancing if you have an essential reason to be out.

As you may be aware, visitors are no longer allowed at Sechelt Hospital, barring exceptional circumstances such as palliative visits by family members. We are working on setting up virtual visiting options for those patients who do not have their own phone or another electronic device for communication.

Once we start admitting patients with COVID-19 infection to Sechelt Hospital, they will be admitted to a dedicated ward that will only house patients with COVID-19 and will only be seen by nurses and physicians who are dedicated to caring for COVID-19 patients. This is to protect other inpatients who do not have COVID-19, as well as care providers in other areas of the hospital. Strict cleaning and decontamination policies have also been implemented to further reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 elsewhere in the hospital and in the community.

While most patients with COVID-19 can be cared for safely at Sechelt Hospital, a percentage of patients will require a higher level of care and possibly intensive care. Policies are being implemented across the region and the province to ensure that everyone who requires a higher level of care will be moved to a larger hospital as soon as it is required.

If you have a loved one who has been admitted to Sechelt Hospital for a COVID-19 infection, please make sure that you are available at all times to ensure that we can contact you immediately should such a transfer be required.



We also want to reassure everyone that our Emergency Department and our hospital continue to care for everyone needing assessment or hospitalization, so if you have an acute medical issue that requires immediate assessment, please do not hesitate to come in.

Following up on Wednesday's Community Update, we would like to make you aware of two new mental health resources. The first is local. Starting next week Tuesday (April 7) Doctors Rahul Gupta, Lisa Kitt and Marius Welgemoed will be running a weekly virtual interactive panel session from 2:00-3:00 PM, with the general goal of supporting mental health and cultivating resilience in our community. Please visit www.sechelthospitalfoundation.org for more information about these ongoing sessions.

There are also up to four free counselling sessions available for those who cannot otherwise afford counselling through WIRTH Hats, a Vancouver company who wants to make counselling more accessible: <https://wirthhats.com/counsellingprogram>.

Please remember that returning travelers must self-isolate for 14 days from the date of return, and everyone with even mild cold or flu symptoms must self-isolate for ten days from the onset of symptoms (with or without a travel history). Self isolation guidelines are available at: www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation.

If you develop more severe cold or flu-like symptoms and feel you need to see a doctor, please call or text our new Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252 or email coastrespclinic@gmail.com. If your symptoms are severe enough to require an ambulance to get to hospital, call 911.

The Respiratory Assessment Clinic is open daily from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. This clinic is by appointment only for people living or staying on the Sunshine Coast.

Please note that the Sunshine Coast Community Task Force coordinated by the District of Sechelt now has their website up and running. If you are interested in finding out more or getting involved, please visit <https://scctaskforce.com/>.

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. The SCR and the Town of Sechelt are also putting out regular COVID-19 emergency updates with community-specific information on local government services.

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