

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

Spring has always been a time of hope and new beginnings, and the last few days of cool, crisp, sunny weather have only reinforced these feelings. On the COVID-19 front, we have had lots of positive news and renewed hope for a return to many of our normal activities in the not too distant future. At the same time, COVID-19 is still actively spreading in our community and we are still months away from achieving widespread immunity through vaccination; we must keep working together to get there.

We continued to be encouraged by the efforts of everyone in our community to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 on the Sunshine Coast. Thank you to all of you who are continuing to take precautions and do everything you can to protect your family, friends and neighbors. We will get through this and if we continue to show each other love, patience, and kindness, our community will be that much stronger.

We are also excited to see our vaccine rollout continue to progress well ahead of schedule. As many of you are aware, we are actively vaccinating everyone in the community who is 70 and older (born in 1951 or earlier), as well as anyone 18 or older who is First Nations, Inuit or Métis. If you have not already done so, please call 1-877-587-5767 or visit the new [online booking portal](#) to book an appointment.

As of this past weekend, a number of our [local pharmacies](#) are now offering vaccinations to everyone aged between the ages of 55 and 65. Please contact Howe Sound Pharmacy, London Drugs, Pharmasave, Rx Drug Mart, Sechelt Pharmacy or Suncoast Pharmacy to book an appointment.

Everyone between the ages of 16 and 74 who meets the criteria for [Extreme Clinical Vulnerability](#) should be receiving an invitation letter by April 15th. Once you have received your invitation letter, you will be able to book an appointment to get immunized by calling 1-877-587-5767 or [booking online](#). If you meet the criteria for Extreme Clinical Vulnerability but have not received your invitation letter by April 15th, please call the above number to determine whether you are eligible. If unsuccessful through this route, please contact your family doctor to discuss eligibility and to arrange your vaccination appointment. Please note that you will have to wait for your age cohort if you do not meet the criteria for Extreme Clinical Vulnerability.

Although we had successfully reduced our local numbers through February and early March, there has been a steady upward trend over the past couple of weeks and we are now averaging over one positive case per day. We don't have data on whether our local cases have been the more transmissible variants that are causing more severe symptoms and affecting younger people, but given that the variants represent half of all new infections across the province, we can assume that they are likely here as well.

With the high rates of COVID-19 infection we are currently seeing across the province, we have to be very careful over the next few weeks. Over the past weekend, we have seen over a thousand new cases per day on multiple days, which is the highest we have seen to date. This is likely the result of travel and increased interactions over the school holidays, as well as the increase in COVID-19 variants.

If what has happened elsewhere in the world is any indication, we can expect to see our provincial hospitalization and death rates rise over the next few weeks. Hopefully we do not run into the hospital and health system capacity issues that are being experienced elsewhere, but that will really depend on how effectively we are able to contain the current increase in cases.



As a result, [new restrictions](#) have been implemented on a short-term basis, with the hope that we can turn things around again in a relatively short time. Please visit www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/restrictions to ensure that you are familiar with the current recommendations. Wide-spread immunity is within our grasp and if we do everything we can over the next few weeks, we should be able to minimize the impact that COVID-19 has on our community.

At the end of the day, it is less about the formal restrictions and guidelines, and more about each of us doing what we can to get through this together. If each of us makes a conscious decision to do our best to support our community, to encourage those around us, to treat our friends and neighbors with kindness and respect, and to keep those around us safe, we will be through this before we know it.

Please continue to take every precaution to protect yourself and those around you. Please continue to minimize your close contacts to your immediate household only and keep your distance from those outside your household. Outdoor gatherings of up to ten people are allowed, provided social distancing and other precautions are maintained, and provided that you limit your interactions to the same ten people. Please wear a mask and wash your hands frequently. Please don't gather indoors with anyone outside your immediate household and please avoid travelling outside our local community unless you have an essential reason (e.g. work or medical appointments).

As we continue to see COVID-19 cases on the Coast, it remains essential that we identify new infections as soon as possible so that we can limit wider spread. Please arrange for testing right away if you have even one 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.

The Respiratory Assessment Clinic remains open Monday through Saturday from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM. 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.

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

Dr Jennifer Baxter
Dr Herman Mentz
Dr Daren Spithoff

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