

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

With important holidays in many of the world's major religions coming up this month and a long weekend just around the corner, we thought it might be a good time to remind everyone about the importance of social distancing, as well as to provide some clarification as to what social distancing means during a time when people traditionally get together to eat and celebrate.

We are still in the early phases of trying to manage COVID-19 and we are all seeing what can happen if COVID-19 starts to spread uncontrollably in a community, so it remains critically important that we all maintain social distancing measures until it is safe to start lifting them.

The basics of social distancing remain the same: **wash your hands frequently, don't touch your face and stay at home unless you have an essential reason to be out or you are outside for fresh air or activity.** If you are out in public, make sure to maintain at least **two meters (6.5 feet) between yourself and any other person.** Also consider wearing a home-made mask if you are out in public.

Social distancing also means that you should not have anyone in your home who is not a member of your household; this includes close friends, people that you really, really like, relatives (*whether you like them or not*), neighbours, casual acquaintances, and people you have never met before.

With increasing evidence that COVID-19 can be spread by people without any symptoms, it doesn't matter whether people outside of your household have also been self-isolating; intimate gatherings are one of the highest risk scenarios for COVID-19 transmission and should be avoided at this time.

While the official limit to gatherings in British Columbia is 50 people, our provincial Public Health officer has made it clear "there is no number that is OK or safe right now" and that all gatherings should be avoided to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This includes birthday parties, religious services, meet-ups, coffee dates, play dates, dinner parties or any other reason to get together. For the time-being, please stick to your own household and do any other connecting via virtual means.

We know this is a lot to ask, but we also know that this is our best chance to avoid the catastrophes unfolding elsewhere in the world. As point of care testing and immunity testing are developed and become widely available, we may be able to lift some of the tighter restrictions that we are seeing now, but this is still some ways off. Likewise, safe and effective treatments or vaccines are still likely a year or more away, so until then, some degree of social distancing measures will probably remain in effect.

As we prepare for the long weekend ahead, we would like to thank everyone in the community who has helped support efforts to contain COVID-19 on the Coast. Whether you did your part by social distancing or contributed in more tangible ways, every little bit adds up and makes a difference. **Thank you!**

Thank you as well to the Coast motorcycle riders and first responders for the 7:00 salute at Sechelt Hospital on Wednesday night, as well as to all the Coasters who howl, dance and make noise to show their support for healthcare workers and other essential service providers every night! **We hear you and we deeply appreciate your support during this difficult time!**

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 a minimum of ten days from the onset of symptoms (*with or without a travel history*).



Recently updated guidelines now state that self-isolation must be extended past ten days if fevers have not been resolved for at least 72 hours and if symptoms (*other than a dry cough*) persist at ten days. Self isolation guidelines are available at the BC CDC website: <http://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, or your symptoms have not improved after five to seven days, please call or text the 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.

Please note that the Respiratory Assessment Clinic will be open from 12:30 to 4:30 PM this Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and will return to regular hours (8:30 AM to 4:30 PM) on Monday, April 13. This clinic is 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. The SCRCD 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! And please keep howling!

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

-Dr Jennifer Baxter
-Dr Herman Mentz
-Dr Daren Spithoff

-Dr Ted Krickan
-Dr Brian Nelson

