

Why is COVID-19 different from the common cold or flu?

None of us are immune to COVID-19 (unless we have already been infected), so we are all susceptible to infection. Although most people develop mild or minimal symptoms, up to 20% of people develop more severe infection, which can lead to hospitalization and even death.

How is COVID-19 transmitted?

COVID-19 is transmitted via contact with mucous membranes, most commonly the eyes, nose and mouth. If your mucous membranes come in contact with COVID-19 because you touch your face after touching a contaminated surface, or you come in direct contact with water droplets from a cough or sneeze, you are at risk for infection.

Who is most at risk for severe infection?

Risk for severe infection increases over the age of fifty and is highest in people over 80. Chronic health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, heart failure, chronic lung conditions, and other health issues also increase the risk for more severe disease.

What happens if we don't do anything?

Most of us would become infected within a few months. This would mean a large number of severely sick people in a very short time, which would make it difficult, if not impossible, for our healthcare providers to keep up.

What can I do to protect myself and my community?

Stay home if at all possible (medical emergencies and essential work/tasks excluded). Order online or by phone and have items delivered to your porch. If you have to go out in public, practice social distancing. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly and don't touch your face unless you have just washed your hands.

What do you mean by social distancing?

If you are out in public, do not gather in groups larger than five people and maintain a distance of at least six feet between all other people at all times. Avoid parties, playdates, concerts, church services, sleepovers, bars, restaurants, gyms, or any other place where people gather.

I'm low risk (age under 50, no other health problems). Why should I do this?

While you may not develop severe symptoms if you contract COVID-19, you now increase the chances that you will pass COVID-19 on to someone who is at higher risk for more severe infection. In Italy and Spain, who are being overwhelmed by COVID-19, much of the initial spread occurred amongst younger people who had minimal symptoms, but then spread to higher risk populations, which is now resulting in widespread loss of life.

What should I do if I just returned from traveling abroad or other parts of Canada?

Self-isolate for fourteen days. If you develop cold or flu symptoms during that time, self-isolate for ten days from the onset of symptoms. Please seek medical assistance if you develop more severe symptoms or your symptoms have not improved within five to seven days.

What should I do if I develop mild cold or flu symptoms?

Self-isolate for ten days from the onset of symptoms. Please contact your family doctor or the Respiratory Assessment Clinic if you have to self-isolate. Please seek medical assistance if you develop more severe symptoms or your symptoms have not improved within five to seven days.

What do you mean by self-isolation?

Please see <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19> for tips on self-isolation.

What should I do if I think I need to see a doctor for my cold or flu symptoms?

Call or text the Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252 or email the clinic at <mailto:coastrespclinic@gmail.com>. The clinic is open seven days per week from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM and is intended for people who are living or staying on the Sunshine Coast. Same day bookings are available.

What should I do if I am having trouble breathing and need an ambulance?

Call 911 and let them know that you are having trouble breathing so that paramedics can take appropriate precautions to protect themselves while they are bringing you to the hospital.

What should I do if I have a non-respiratory medical issue and need to see my doctor?

All the family medicine clinics on the Coast remain open but have shifted almost entirely to virtual or phone care during this crisis. If your physician determines that you need to be seen in person, arrangements will be made for an in-person appointment.

Please contact your usual family medicine clinic to make an appointment. If you do not have a family doctor, please contact the Arbutus Clinic at 604-885-2384, the Cowrie Clinic at 604-885-6222, the Gibsons Clinic at 604-886-2868, the Sechelt Clinic at 604-885-2257, or the Upstream Clinic at 604-885-6400 to book a virtual or in-person walk-in clinic appointment.

What should I do if I have a non-respiratory medical emergency?

If you have an acute medical issue that requires immediate attention by a doctor, proceed to the Emergency Department at Sechelt Hospital as you usually would. Please call your family doctor or the walk-in clinic for any medical issues that do not require immediate attention.

If you have an acute medical issue that requires immediate attention by a doctor and you require transportation by an ambulance, please call 911.

**Thank you to everyone who is working to keep our community as safe as possible!
We will get through this together!**