

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

We recently received feedback from staff in our Emergency Department expressing concerns about people attending parties and disregarding social distancing recommendations. Unfortunately, some partygoers have ended up in our Emergency Department, which puts our healthcare team at risk and speaks to the risk this presents to our larger community as well.

We remain impressed with and appreciative of everything that people are doing to combat COVID-19 on the Coast. However, it takes all of us to make this work, so we would ask anyone who has not been taking COVID-19 seriously, or has started to relax on social distancing, to consider the implications of their actions.

While our current restrictions have resulted in major changes to all of our lives, we all need to keep the bigger picture in mind. In reality, we have only been doing this for a very short time; we need to prepare ourselves to do what we need to do for as long as we need to do it. If we don't and our actions lead to local COVID-19 outbreaks, then we may end up with even more severe restrictions for a much longer time.

The best way to reduce our risk of a local outbreak is to abide by social distancing recommendations and avoid things like parties and gatherings. Any situation where multiple people from different households come together in larger numbers or closer quarters increases the risk that COVID-19 spreads in our community.

While serious illness in younger previously healthy people remains less common, it does happen. The bigger risk, however, is that the more people who are infected at any given time, the harder it becomes to protect the most vulnerable people in our community. A mild infection in a young healthy person can easily be transmitted to multiple people who are at higher risk of more severe infection, thereby increasing the risk to our larger community and to our healthcare workers on the frontline.

If you are, know, or love someone over the age of 55 who is obese and/or has hypertension, diabetes, heart problems or a chronic lung condition, then you are, know or love someone who is at increased risk of developing more severe complications from COVID-19. That risk level increases with age and the number of health problems, so the more we can do to protect ourselves and those we care about, the better.

Eventually we may have vaccines and effective treatments for COVID-19, but right now all we have are simple things that all of us can do. Unlike other parts of the world, we are mostly being asked to do these simple things on a voluntary basis, which means that each of us has to commit to doing what we can for as long as it is necessary. Right now, it is still necessary, so please continue to do everything you can!

With respect to getting outside for exercise, fresh air and activity, we recommend individual activities like walking, hiking, running, biking, paddling and other activities that allow social distancing to be maintained. We would caution against activities like hockey, soccer, baseball, tennis, volleyball, basketball and pickleball at this time, as there is increased risk of transmission with close physical contact and/or cross-contamination from sports equipment.

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Over the next few months, we will need to figure out how to restart these types of activities in a way that does not result in new outbreaks. This will be a process that needs to be guided by the best information that we have available and we will need to follow the recommendations of our public health officials in order to do this safely. Please be patient and keep working with us to ensure that our efforts to date do not go to waste.

For those of you who are perhaps struggling with staying patient and/or feeling frustrated or angry about the current situation, please consider tuning in to this week's live [MedTalk Sechelt Hospital Foundation](#) from 2:00 to 3:00 PM on Tuesday, April 28, 2020. Doctors Gupta, Kitt and Welgemoed will host and lead an ongoing conversation around building resilience in our community, with a focus on managing frustration and anger during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you develop mild cold or flu symptoms, please contact your family doctor or the Respiratory Assessment Clinic to arrange for testing and assessment. You will be required to self-isolate until you are cleared.

If your COVID-19 test comes back positive, you will need to continue self-isolating, as will your recent contacts. Public Health will follow up with you and your contacts to arrange for further assessment and testing where necessary. Self isolation guidelines are available at: [BC CDC](#)

If you develop more severe cold or flu-like symptoms and feel you need to see a doctor, 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, please call 911.

Please note that the Respiratory Assessment Clinic is open seven days a week from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM and is intended for people living or staying on the Sunshine Coast.

We have recently seen a number of people in the Emergency Department who delayed seeking care until they were sick enough to be hospitalized. Please remember that our local medical clinics and emergency department remain open (and safe) to see anyone who needs medical care. Please do not hesitate to contact your family doctor if you have concerns about your health. If you do not have a family doctor, please call your nearest medical clinic, as each clinic is providing virtual care for people in this situation.

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 SCRD 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. Ted Krickan
- Dr. Herman Mentz
- Dr. Brian Nelson
- Dr. Daren Spithoff