

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

As we edge closer towards easing restrictions and opening our community back up, we want to recognize and thank all of you for the efforts you have made to support and protect our community, and to prevent transmission of COVID-19 on the Sunshine Coast. It has been inspiring to see how our community has responded with courage, kindness, positivity, and creativity, all of which we will need in the coming months.

We are anticipating that things will start to open up province-wide over the next few weeks, but it is not yet clear exactly what that will look like. We do know that it will likely be a slow process, so please prepare for that. It is also clear that we will need to continue to employ social distancing and other preventive measures for the foreseeable future, so please don't let up on this.

We all need to remain committed to these measures and find creative ways to return closer to normal, while protecting ourselves and each other. Hopefully this will buy us enough time to develop effective treatments and vaccines without overwhelming our healthcare system.

Over the last few weeks, we have commented on the challenges that the COVID-19 preventive measures have created for various groups in our community. One group that we have not yet mentioned is youth and young adults, who have been impacted as much or more than anyone. The remainder of this update is for you.

Thank you to all of you who have been social distancing and making sacrifices to protect those at higher risk in our community. We know it is not easy to be pulled away from friends and activities that you enjoy, but we also believe that your efforts are part of the reason we have been successful in containing COVID-19 so far.

As noted above, it is likely that some degree of preventive measures will be necessary for months to come. This will make it difficult to return to where things were, but at the same time it remains important to maintain connections with friends and extended family. Wherever possible, we continue to encourage you to continue to do this virtually, while maintaining physical distancing, hand hygiene and other preventive measures when meeting in person.

While time off school or work can mean a lot of down time, it can also open up opportunities in other areas. This is a good time to learn new skills or to learn more about something you're interested in. There are many amazing online resources that have opened up as a result of COVID-19, so please take advantage!

We would also encourage you to maintain your physical wellness (and by extension, your mental, spiritual, and emotional wellness). Consider participating in online activity classes and stay active by getting outdoors every day. We have many amazing paths, trails and beaches that are perfect for walking, hiking, running, and biking. With the weather warming up, paddleboarding, kayaking and other water activities are also a great option. Just make sure to keep two meters between yourself and others!

Though volunteering will look different than it used to, this is still a great time to give back to the community. You may want to get involved with various efforts to support essential workers on the Coast. You may have a neighbour or loved one who cannot have visitors but would appreciate a phone call or virtual visit. You may have a creative idea to link up friends and classmates, or to reach out to someone who may need help.

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The [Sunshine Coast Community Task Force](#) is looking for volunteers as well - please see their website for details. If you have a specific area of interest, you can also find a list of local non-profit organizations on the [Sunshine Coast Resource Centre website](#). A phone call or email may open the door to an incredible experience!

We recognize that the last few weeks have been stressful for a lot of people, and our youth are no exception. If you would like help with stress management techniques, there are excellent online resources available through [Foundry](#). If you are having trouble coping or struggling with your mental health, Foundry also provides free virtual counselling for young people aged 12 to 24 and their caregivers.

Locally, our Child and Youth Mental Health team remains available to talk and provide support on an as-needed basis. To arrange a virtual or phone appointment, please call 604-866-5525 in Gibsons and 604-740-8900 in Sechelt.

If you are concerned for your safety or are in crisis, please reach out for help. Contact a friend or family member. Call the BC crisis hotline 24/7 at 1-866-661-3311 or access online help through <http://crisiscentreat.ca> or <http://youthinbc.com>. Help is also available through your family doctor or the Sechelt Hospital Emergency Department.

For high school students who need to see a doctor for medical issues, the Chatelech and Elphinstone doctors are still seeing patients virtually. Please connect with your school to arrange an appointment. Otherwise, please book a virtual appointment with your family doctor or call your nearest medical clinic if you do not have a family doctor.

Likewise, the Women's Wellness Clinic and the Youth Clinic remain open through the Gibsons Health Unit. Please call 604-984-5070 to find out current hours and to arrange an appointment.

Please note that there was an error regarding the Addictions Services in our previous update: counsellors are available Monday to Friday at 604-885-6101, not seven days a week, as we previously stated.

Please note that for anyone with possible COVID-19 symptoms, the Respiratory Assessment Clinic remains 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. To request an assessment, please call or text 604-740-1252 or email <mailto:coastrespclinic@gmail.com>.

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