

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

As you are probably all aware, there has been some more good news on the COVID-19 front this week. With our province-wide COVID-19 numbers continuing to move in the right direction, the provincial government has released a [Restart Plan](#), with restrictions starting to lift as of May 14th. Although this is exciting news (for all of us), this will need to happen in a slow stepwise fashion in order to ensure that we can assess the effects of each step and adjust our approach if we need to.

The first thing we want to emphasize is the ongoing importance of physical distancing and other preventive measures as we start to open up. In the coming months, our ability to prevent COVID-19 transmission and to contain outbreaks will depend on all of us continuing to take personal responsibility for doing our part.

A recent review of world-wide data in the Canadian Medical Association Journal strongly suggests that social distancing, school closures and restrictions of gatherings are very effective measures for preventing and containing COVID-19. Our provincial data on confirmed cases is also consistent with other places that have successfully implemented these types of measures. In short, what we are doing works!

This means that even as we start to do more things outside our homes, we should all continue to exercise as much caution as possible. As our social interactions start to increase, we should continue to maintain physical distancing by keeping at least two metres between ourselves and others. Please reserve hugs and handshakes for family members. Please wash your hands frequently, and if you meet up with a friend, please do so outdoors rather than indoors. Masks are still advised when out in public and non-essential travel should be avoided.

While the hard limit on gatherings remains at 50 people, we are being advised to limit gatherings with people outside of our household to no more than six people as of May 14th. If our province-wide and local infection rates remain low, we will hopefully be able to open up more and more as time moves along. That being said, we must also be prepared to increase restrictions again if our infections numbers start to rise.

It is important to remember that we are still in the early stages of a global pandemic and that our population demographics would suggest that we are at higher risk than most communities. In addition, anyone with hypertension, diabetes, obesity, heart disease or chronic lung disease falls into a higher risk category for COVID-19, so it is important for all of us to continue to protect the most vulnerable in our community.

If you are someone who is in a higher risk category, or someone who lives with or cares for someone who is potentially more vulnerable, we would recommend that you continue with the more restrictive protective measures even as things start to open up. Please stay at home except for essential work or medical needs, try to order for delivery whenever possible, and avoid contact with anyone outside of your immediate household.

As we move forward, early detection of COVID-19 infection remains critical to preventing outbreaks in our community. We are currently testing everyone who develops any new cold or flu symptoms, no matter how mild. You should still be [self-isolating](#) in your home while you await testing results.

So if you do develop [possible COVID-19 symptoms](#), please contact your family doctor or call or text the Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252 or email coastrespclinic@gmail.com. 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.

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Please note that the Respiratory Assessment Clinic does provide a daily home outreach service for anyone who is homebound, at high risk because of other medical conditions, or unable to safely travel to the clinic.

If you run a business on the Coast, we would encourage you to work closely with [WorkSafeBC](#) and the [Public Health Office](#) to ensure that you are doing everything you can to protect your clients and employees as things start to open up next week.

We would also encourage all employers to support your employees by advising them to get tested and to stay at home if they have any cold or flu-type symptoms. It is only by everyone working together that we will continue to be successful.

As we head into the weekend, we would encourage everyone to participate in the [Walk for your Healthcare Provider](#) event that runs from May 8 - 14. This is a virtual event to promote daily healthy activity while showing support for all our local health-care providers. Please take a 20 - 30 minute walk (*while social distancing*) at some point in the next week and email your pictures to admin.scdofp@divisionsbc.ca to have your pictures posted on our social media or post yourself with the hashtag: #scwalk2020. There are 20 T-Shirt's to be given away to those who submit photos. For more information please visit: [Sunshine Coast Division of Family Practice – Walk for your Healthcare Provider](#).

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. As local parks, programs and facilities begin to open up, please visit the [SCRD](#) and the [District of Sechelt](#) websites for updates.

Keep well, wash your hands, keep your distance, and until May 14th, please stay at home unless you have a medical emergency or another essential task!

Sincerely,

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

- Dr Jennifer Baxter
- Dr Ted Krickan
- Dr Herman Mentz
- Dr Brian Nelson
- Dr Daren Spithoff