

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

As we approach the mid-way point of what has been a beautiful summer so far, many of us are wondering what the fall will bring with respect to COVID-19. In the past few weeks, we have seen provincial case numbers start to rise again, particularly in the Interior Health Region. While our local case numbers have remained low, with only two positive tests in the past month, it is a good reminder that the pandemic is not over yet.

Please continue to exercise caution and use protective measures such as frequent handwashing and wearing masks in public spaces. As many of you are aware, our hospital has been running over-capacity for many weeks now. While this is not directly COVID-related, we do need to do everything we can to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak here and avoid further strain on our already-stretched healthcare system.

That being said, the biggest thing we can do to help minimize the impact of this fourth wave of COVID-19 is to make sure as many people as possible are fully vaccinated. Current outbreaks in BC and around the world are generally being driven by those who haven't been vaccinated.

Recent data from the United States makes it pretty clear that people who are not fully vaccinated are far more likely to become seriously ill, require hospitalization, and die from COVID-19. In fact, 99.5% of all people who died from COVID-19 in the US over the past month or so were unvaccinated. And although people who are fully vaccinated can be infected with COVID-19, it is extremely unlikely that they will end up in hospital (less than 0.06% chance) or die from COVID-19 (less than 0.01% chance).

Though our local healthcare providers have done an amazing job running vaccination clinics, we still have a ways to go before we have a sufficient percentage of our community fully vaccinated. As of last week, 82% of those everyone over the age of 12 had received at least one vaccine dose, which is excellent. However, only 65% of those over 12 have received a second dose, with lower vaccination rates for people between the ages of 12 and 59.

While this likely reflects the challenges of running a vaccination campaign during the summer months, we do need to continue working towards a high rate of full vaccination. This will decrease the risk of local outbreaks, protect our healthcare system, and help minimize the risk of developing new strains of COVID-19. This, in turn, will protect our most vulnerable community members, including the elderly and those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. If you have not yet received your second vaccine, please don't put it off any longer.

For those who have not yet been vaccinated, we now have over a year of data on both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, and close to a year of data on the AstraZeneca vaccine. It is clear that the vaccines are safe and that they are effective at reducing both the risk of contracting COVID-19, as well as the severity of COVID-19 infections for vaccinated people who do get infected.

If you have not yet received your first dose, please do the right thing and get vaccinated as soon as you can. We have a window of opportunity to protect our community as well as we can, but it requires all of us to do our part. If you are an employer, please encourage your employees to get vaccinated and provide time for them to do so. If you know of friends or family members aged 12 or older who have not yet been vaccinated, please encourage them to do so as well.

As of this week, the vaccination clinic at the Sechelt Seniors Activity Centre will be closed. There will be a number of vaccination clinics held at the Gibsons Legion and the Madeira Park Legion through August and September, as well as pop-up clinics at various locations in Sechelt and Gibsons. Please check the Coast Reporter or the Sunshine Coast [BC Facebook page](#) for details on times and locations.

If you are 12 or older and have not yet registered to be vaccinated, please register online at <https://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/> by phone at 1-833-838-2323, or in person at any Service BC location. If you received your first dose before June 16, you are now eligible for your second dose. Please note that walk-in appointments are available at the Gibsons Legion this Wednesday, August 4, from 9AM to 8PM.

With respect to testing, we are still testing dozens of people with COVID-19 symptoms every week. It remains essential to identify new infections when they arise, so if you meet [criteria for testing](#), please contact the Respiratory Assessment Clinic at 604-740-1252, or at [coastrespclinic@gmail.com](mailto:coastrespclinic@gmail.com).

Please arrange for testing right away if you have one of the key [COVID-19 symptoms](#): fever, chills, new or worsening cough, difficulty breathing, or loss of taste or smell. Please get tested as well if you have two or more minor symptoms for more than a day.



Please make sure to self-isolate at home if you are awaiting assessment or test results. You must continue to [self-isolate](#) until you have tested negative and your symptoms have resolved. If you test negative, but continue to have ongoing or worsening symptoms, please contact the Respiratory Assessment Clinic.

If you have more severe symptoms and believe you may need to be admitted to hospital, please go to the Sechelt Hospital Emergency Department. If you need an ambulance, please call 911. Please remember that the Emergency Department remains open and safe for anyone with a medical emergency.

Keep well, enjoy the rest of the summer, and thank you again for all that you have done and are doing!

Sincerely,

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

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