



Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

Over the last month, we have seen the number of new COVID-19 cases continue to rise across Canada and around the globe. Here in BC, the number of new cases has remained fairly stable over the last few weeks, though we are still seeing far more new cases than we did earlier in the summer. We are also seeing an increased number of hospitalizations across the province as people in higher risk categories are infected.

Locally, the latest [public Health Authority data](#) indicates that we had seven new COVID-19 cases on the Sunshine Coast during the month of August, for a total of 14 cases since the beginning of the year. This is yet another reminder that COVID-19 is present in our local community and that we need to keep working to minimize infections, especially with our population demographics and limited health resources.

Diving into the end of August numbers a little deeper, we are encouraged that overall infection rates as a percentage of total population in our community have remained quite low and much lower than our provincial infection rate. This speaks to our overall success in minimizing COVID-19 infection in our community. Similarly, our local rate of test positivity (the number of positive tests as a percentage of total tests) remains low at 1.5%. This is comparable to the provincial rate of test positivity of 1.7%. Together, these numbers indicate that, as of August, our community has done a good job.

That being said, the Respiratory Assessment Clinic remains extremely busy as we approach the fall flu season, and we are in the process of expanding our capacity once again. We are currently testing more than forty people per day, including children. This number is anticipated to rise further as we get into flu season.

As noted in our previous update, we are providing testing for people of all ages, including children. For those children ages 4 to 18 who will not tolerate a nasopharyngeal swab, the saline gargle test is now available. If your child develops COVID-19 symptoms and needs to be tested, please make sure that you review the [online video](#) and instructions from the [BCCDC](#) prior to getting tested. Your child must not eat, drink, chew gum, or brush their teeth for at least an hour prior to testing. We would recommend your child practices gargling with salt water at home to make sure that s/he feels comfortable with the test and knows what to expect.

There has been some confusion recently regarding when children should be tested and when children should be kept home from school. The current guidance from the BCCDC recommends testing for any child with [one COVID-19 symptom](#) that lasts more than 24 hours, any child with a fever, and any child with [two or more COVID-19 symptoms](#). If you are not sure whether your child should be tested, please contact the Respiratory Assessment Clinic for a virtual assessment or use the [provincial online self-assessment tool](#)

As a reminder, the [list of potential COVID-19 symptoms](#) remains quite long. As per the BCCDC website, these symptoms include: fever, chills, a new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, loss of sense of smell or taste, headache, fatigue, diarrhea, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, and muscle aches. It is also possible for COVID-19 to present with nasal congestion, pink eye, dizziness, confusion, abdominal pain, new skin rashes or discolouration of fingers and toes. Please keep these symptoms in mind when trying to determine whether you or a loved one should be tested for COVID-19.

In terms of when to keep your child home from school, daycare, or other activities outside the home, it is always good policy to keep your child home if they develop any potentially infectious symptoms. In the setting of COVID-19, it is especially important to keep your child home and self-isolating if s/he meets criteria for COVID-19 testing or is awaiting COVID-19 test results. Your child can return to school if s/he tests negative and his/her symptoms have resolved (unless advised otherwise by Public Health).

As before, we encourage everyone to continue with the basic measures that will help keep infection rates low and limit the impact on our hospital and healthcare providers. Please keep your bubbles as small as possible and keep at least two metres between yourself and anyone outside of your bubble whenever possible. Please wear a mask in situations where it is impossible to maintain social distancing. [Wash your hands frequently](#), and especially after touching any high contact surface. Always wash your hands before and after eating, drinking, or touching your face or mask.

If you develop cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms, please contact the Respiratory Assessment Clinic by phone or text at 604-740-1252, or by email at [coastrespclinic@gmail.com](mailto:coastrespclinic@gmail.com). The clinic is open seven days a week from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. We would request that you leave a single message, text or email when contacting the clinic; we will contact you as soon as we are able and leaving multiple messages makes it more difficult for our staff to respond in a timely manner.



As we continue to test everyone with possible COVID-19 symptoms, please do not hesitate to call if you become even mildly ill. Please make sure to self-isolate if you have symptoms and are awaiting testing, or if you are waiting for test results. This means staying home from work and avoiding all other activities outside your home until you have tested negative and your symptoms have resolved.

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.

If you are worried that you may have been exposed to COVID-19 after hearing about an outbreak in an area you have visited recently, the dates and locations of COVID-19 public exposures are online for each Health Region ([Vancouver Coastal Health](#), [Fraser Health](#), [Interior Health](#), [Vancouver Island Health](#), [Northern Health](#)).

In the next couple of weeks, flu shots will be available and are recommended for everyone over six months old. Flu shots will be available through a number of [local pharmacies](#) and there will also be flu clinics at the [Gibsons, Sechelt and Madeira Park Royal Canadian Legions](#). For families with children up to 18 years of age, the [Gibsons Health Unit, Sechelt Health Unit and Pender Harbour Health Centre](#) will also be offering flu vaccines for the entire family.

Keep well, wash your hands, keep your distance or wear a mask, stay local if you can, and please keep doing everything you can to keep our community safe!

Sincerely,

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

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