

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

While the latest local [COVID-19 data](#) showed we had only three new COVID-19 cases on the lower Sunshine Coast during the month of October, it does not reflect the reality of the last couple of weeks. Over that time we have seen an 80% increase in cases across Vancouver Coastal Health. We are working with Public Health and Vancouver Coastal Health to advocate for more frequent updates on local data, but until that happens, it is safe to assume that we are seeing similar increases in local cases.

This makes it all the more important that we continue to work together to put the brakes on COVID-19 in our community by following the new [Public Health orders](#) which came out this week, and which have been extended to December 7th. Please review the new orders and do everything you can to limit the risk of transmitting COVID-19 infection; limit your interactions outside of your household as much as possible, avoid gathering indoors and outdoors, and avoid all non-essential travel. Please note that masks are now mandatory in all public indoor places as well.

Although we are technically part of Vancouver Coastal Health, we are very much separate from the rest of the Lower Mainland both geographically and in terms of our rates of COVID-19 infection. As per our previous recommendations, please do not travel off-Coast for anything other than essential work or medical appointments. This now includes [travel for outdoor sports](#), which should be kept within our local community for the next two weeks. We have been doing a great job so far, so let's continue to use our situation to our best advantage by avoiding the ferry if we can!

We are happy to announce that the [saline gargle test](#) is now available for all adults and children over four years of age. In order to be able to use the test, you must not eat, drink, smoke, vape, brush your teeth or chew gum for at least an hour prior to the test, as these activities will reduce the accuracy of the test. We would recommend [reviewing the instructional video](#) prior to your testing appointment. If you don't qualify for the saline gargle test, or your saline gargle test shows evidence of food particles, a nasopharyngeal swab will be required.

Please continue the basic preventative measures that will help keep infection rates low and limit the impact on our hospital and healthcare providers. Please keep at least two metres between yourself and anyone outside of your immediate household whenever possible. Wear a mask when 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 do 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 coastrespcclinic@gmail.com. The clinic remains open seven days a week from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

If you are awaiting assessment or test results, you must [self-isolate](#) at home, ideally in a separate space where you can limit contact with other members of your household. This means staying home from work, school, and all other activities until you have tested negative and your symptoms have resolved. If you test positive for COVID-19, you will have to continue self-isolation until you are cleared by Public Health.

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.

Please note that flu shots are still available and are recommended for everyone over six months old. Flu shots are available through [local pharmacies](#) and clinics, and our local health units also have flu vaccines for families with children under 18.

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

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