

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

The last few weeks have been a bit of a roller coaster. With the holiday season upon us and news of promising vaccines on the horizon, we are seeing a glimmer of hope that life will return to something like normal in the foreseeable future. At the same time, we have had news of two local businesses shutting down after positive case(s) among staff, and the release of preliminary local case numbers for November, with 19 new cases representing a significant jump in cases on the Coast over the past month.

The increased cases are a good reminder that COVID-19 is here and that we must continue to take every precaution to protect our most vulnerable until vaccines and/or effective treatments are available. Please review the most recent [Public Health Orders](#), (updated December 7th) and make sure that you are familiar with and following them.

This is a time of year when we are used to celebrating and gathering with friends and family, but we must continue to limit our physical, in-person contacts as much as possible. Please avoid both indoor and outdoor social gatherings with anyone outside of your immediate household, and please avoid any non-essential travel. The only people who should be in your house this holiday season are the people who live there.

Like you, we can't wait for this pandemic to be over and we know how challenging the past few months have been for everyone. However, we are seeing progress in our region as a result of your efforts and it would be a shame to lose ground at this point. Our community has a lot to be proud of, but it is too early to stop; if we are successful, there is a good chance that we will all be celebrating in style by this time next year!

We continue to receive queries about what to do if you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and about when to get tested.

When someone tests positive for COVID-19, Public Health does contact tracing to identify all of that person's contacts from 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms (the asymptomatic infectious phase) to the time the person self-isolated. Public Health then determines whether each contact is high risk or low risk for contracting COVID-19, based on the amount of time spent in close proximity and the nature of the interaction.

If you are identified as a high risk contact of someone who tested positive, meaning that you were within six feet of that person for more than fifteen minutes, or that person is a member of your household, then you will be contacted by Public Health and advised to self-isolate for 14 days (potentially longer if you develop symptoms).

If you are a low risk contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19, meaning that you were in the same space but only within six feet for a short time and you were wearing a mask, you will not be contacted by Public Health and will only need to monitor for symptoms. That being said, it does make sense to keep track of where you go and who you are with in case you develop symptoms.

Regardless of whether you are a low risk or high risk contact, or whether you have no known exposure to COVID-19, testing is only being done for people who develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#). The only exception to this would be if Public Health advises you to get tested, which is rare if you are not experiencing symptoms.

For school age children, we do not recommend testing for children with new brief (less than 24 hours) isolated symptoms (e.g. a runny nose or a sore throat). If new symptoms arise, or the original symptoms worsen or persist and become associated with a fever, then assessment and testing should be arranged.

We would also like to remind everyone that if your child has any new infectious symptoms, they should remain home from school, sports and other activities until their symptoms resolve. This applies even if your child has tested negative for COVID-19. This will help to prevent other children (and adults) from getting sick and potentially having to undergo unnecessary isolation and testing.

Please continue the basic preventative measures that will help keep infection rates low, protect our most vulnerable, and limit the impact on our hospital and healthcare providers. Until a significant proportion of our community has been vaccinated for COVID-19, these preventive measures are the only, and most effective, tools we have to prevent viral transmission and protect those around us.

Please keep at least two metres between yourself and anyone outside of your immediate household whenever possible. Wear a mask whenever you are in a public indoor space or 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 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 coastrespclinic@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-isolating 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.

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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