

Dear Fellow Sunshine Coast Residents:

As we prepare for a holiday season unlike any we have seen in our lifetime, we want to thank all of you who have been doing your part to help prevent COVID-19 transmission in our community. This has been an incredibly challenging year in so many ways for all of us, but it has also been very inspiring to see how our community has worked together to support and protect each other.

With the Pfizer vaccine approved by Health Canada last week and the Moderna vaccine looking like it will be approved soon, we are seeing hope for an end to this pandemic. That being said, it will still be many months before enough vaccines have been administered to have a meaningful protective effect for the wider community. This means that, for the foreseeable future, it will remain important for all of us to continue to do our part by taking precautions and doing what we can to protect those around us.

At this point, it looks like we will not see any COVID vaccines on the Coast until the Moderna vaccine is approved, as the Pfizer vaccine has storage and transportation requirements that make it difficult to distribute to smaller communities. Once vaccines do start to roll out to smaller communities like ours, it will happen in a sequential fashion, with those at highest risk receiving the vaccine first. We do not expect vaccines to be available for average risk people until the late spring or summer.

While both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines appear to have a safety profile comparable to flu and pneumonia vaccines, we don't yet have enough data to know how long the vaccine-induced immunity will last or how soon we will be able to return to something like normal. We anticipate that we will continue to have some restrictions into next fall, but this will depend on our success with our current measures, as well as how many people in our community have been vaccinated.

In terms of our current local COVID-19 numbers, we continue to see positive cases in the Respiratory Assessment Clinic with an average of almost three positive cases per day over the past week. These case numbers reflect exposures within the past fourteen days and it will be another two weeks before we know how many people have become infected after contact with our current cases. It is only at this point that we will know whether our current measures are having the desired effect.

Please do everything you can to make sure that the holiday season does not become a time when COVID-19 really explodes on the Coast. Do not have anyone outside of your immediate household in your home. Do not gather indoors or outdoors with friends, neighbours, or people outside your immediate household. Maintain at least six feet between yourself and those around you whenever possible. Wear a mask when you are in a public indoor space or when you cannot maintain social distancing. Wash your hands frequently and find creative ways to bring holiday cheer to those around you. We are in this together and we will get through it!

There appears to be some confusion in the community as to what we mean when we report positive cases. As we are only testing people with symptoms, each positive case represents someone in our community who has developed [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and has subsequently tested positive for COVID-19. Data on testing in Canada would suggest that the false positive rate is extremely low, somewhere in the order of 0.01%, so if you have a positive test, we can be quite certain that you actually have COVID-19.

If you do develop [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.

It is vitally important that you stay home if you feel even the slightest bit unwell. If you develop any new or worsening [COVID-19 symptoms](#), you must [self-isolate](#) and arrange for testing through the Respiratory Assessment Clinic. Quick identification and isolation is the key to preventing one infection from becoming dozens.

School-aged children may be monitored at home for 24 hours if their symptoms are mild, but should be tested if their symptoms persist over 24 hours, or if their symptoms worsen. Symptoms that warrant testing for COVID-19 include: fever, chills, new cough (or worsening of a chronic cough), shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, loss of sense of taste or smell, headache, fatigue, diarrhea, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, and/or muscle aches.

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, and please keep doing everything you can to keep our community safe! We wish you all a safe and happy holiday season, and peace, joy and good health for the coming year!

Sincerely,

The Sunshine Coast COVID Physician Task Force

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