

September 15, 2020

We wanted to provide a community update on COVID-19 activity in the Powell River area. We appreciate that having COVID-19 cases in a community can create a lot of anxiety and a desire for more information. The community of Powell River is important to us and we want to ensure you have the information you need to stay safe.

We are aware there has been a wish to know specific case numbers and locations. The collection and reporting of COVID-19 data is under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Health, not individual health authorities. What we can share is that there have been close to 30 people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Powell River region. This is **not** an outbreak; it represents community transmission similar to what we are seeing across the VCH region. All of the cases are associated with known exposure events or contact with other cases. There are cases in both the Tla'amin Nation and within the broader community.

Everyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the Powell River area is isolating and is being followed closely by VCH Public Health. Any time a person is identified as positive, contact tracing is in place to help identify close contacts of the case who are at risk for developing COVID-19 so they can be isolated to prevent further spread. Most of this work happens directly with the people impacted and involves a thorough assessment of the risk to others. If the contacts who have been isolating develop symptoms, they will be tested and continue to isolate until told by Public Health that they can come off isolation. For more information on contact tracing, please visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation/contact-tracing>

Every community in BC is dealing with the challenges presented by COVID-19. Knowing how many cases or where the cases are located does not keep people safe. Everyone in a community is vulnerable to COVID-19. It's important for everyone to not make assumptions about how COVID-19 occurred in their community and to follow Public Health advice to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. Please follow the guidance of Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry to, "Be kind, be calm and be safe."

How to prevent COVID-19 transmission

Our advice to the public includes: stay home if sick, wash your hands, avoid touching your face, maintain physical distance when possible in public settings and wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible. Keep any gatherings small – follow "stick to six" and keep your social bubbles to six people or less. For resources on preventing COVID-19, please visit: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/about-covid-19/prevention>

Public notifications

Public Health only issues public exposure alerts if they've determined there was a risk of public exposure and they're not able to contact everyone who may have been exposed. **Public notification has not occurred for Powell River as Public Health has been able to identify close contacts and safely isolate them while they monitor for symptoms for 14 days.** If you have been identified as a COVID-19 case or close contact, please know that VCH Public Health will contact you directly and provide further instructions.

VCH posts all of public exposure notifications on its website and provides people information on what to do if they may have been exposed to COVID-19. We encourage the public to frequently check the COVID-19 public exposures page: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/public-exposures>.

BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) publicly reports on the number of COVID-19 cases in BC, including detailed maps with the number of cases by Local Health Area (updated monthly): <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data>. If there is a community cluster of cases, this information will not align exactly as new cases arise, but VCH Public Health is aware of each new case and is following up on them to prevent further transmission.

COVID-19 testing

Testing is available for anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19, even mild symptoms. If you develop symptoms, use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool (<https://bc.thrive.health>) to help determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. You can complete this assessment for yourself or on behalf of someone else if they are unable to.

Testing is not recommended for people without symptoms. Learn more about common COVID-19 symptoms at: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms>

Please contact your health care provider, 811, or visit the VCH website for testing locations. A full list of assessment and testing collection centres in the province can be found at:

- [Collection centre finder \(Mobile and desktop\)](#)
- [Collection centre finder for Internet Explorer users](#)

In Powell River, people can be tested at Medical Clinic Associates (visit <https://powellrivermedicalclinic.ca/covid-19> to book an appointment) and at Powell River General Hospital emergency department. The Tla'amin Nation has also been holding drive-through community testing clinics (visit <https://www.tlaaminnation.com> for more information). A new testing site is being set-up at the Powell River Recreation Complex and will be open in the next week.

For more information on testing, please visit: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/covid-19-testing>

Hospital preparedness

It is safe to come to our hospitals and clinics. At VCH, infection prevention and control has always been a top priority. To protect our patients, clients, staff and physicians, all our hospitals and clinics follow the safety standards set by Infection Prevention and Control, Public Health, the Provincial Medical Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control. These protocols are the same across all VCH sites, including Powell River General Hospital, and are reviewed regularly.

Be assured that it is safe for you to come to the hospital or clinic if you need medical care. We are taking a number of measures to ensure you and your team of health care providers are safe every step of the way.

- After arriving at the hospital or clinic site, you will enter the building from the main entrance.
- If you need assistance (mobility, translation, etc.), please let us know, and we will work with you to ensure your needs are met.
- You will be met with a screener who will ask you to please sanitize your hands.
- The screener will also ask you a few questions – this is to check if you might have cold or flu-like symptoms. If you do, you will be asked to wear a mask. If you are a visitor who has cold or flu-like symptoms, you will be asked to not enter the building.
- As you move through the hospital or clinic, you may notice our spaces look a little different:
 - You may see floor decals/markers as well as signage at elevators or in the cafeteria. These are to help you maintain a physical distance of two metres.
 - You will also notice our staff and physicians are using personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks, gloves, gowns and eye protection. This is for both your protection and for the protection of our staff and physicians.
- We have also increased our cleaning and disinfection not only of our clinical areas, but also our waiting rooms, cafeterias, coffee shops and common areas.

For more information on safety in our hospitals, please visit: <http://www.vch.ca/your-care/restarting-our-services>

For additional information and resources on COVID-19, please visit: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19>

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