

Daily update – April 8, 2020

VCH Preparations for COVID-19

Over the past several weeks, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) has been working closely with the Ministry of Health to prepare clients, patients and residents across the province to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and flatten the curve. The planning underway is to ensure urban, rural and remote communities have the support, resources and supplies they need to manage the spread of COVID-19 in our acute and long term care facilities as well as in the community.

A number of measures are in place to protect the community and health-care workers, including:

- Freeing up additional beds through the postponement of surgeries, non-emergency procedures and the movement of patients to alternative settings;
- Additional training for staff and physicians in the use of personal protective equipment and providing care to COVID-19 patients;
- Our health-care sites have dedicated sections in their hospitals or clinics to safely care for non-COVID-19, suspected COVID-19 and COVID-19 confirmed patients.
- Restricting visitors to essential visits only at all VCH facilities. These visits include compassionate care and visits paramount to patient, client, resident care and well-being, such as assistance with feeding/mobility. Existing registered volunteers providing services will also be exempted.
- At our long-term care homes, VCH has issued a Public Health Order further restricting visitation to family members and spiritual advisor of residents who are clinically assessed to be at the end of their lives.

VCH wants to reassure the public that our emergency departments can safely receive and care for individuals who experience health conditions that require emergency care. Please do not delay in seeking care as this could exacerbate your condition.

Ministry of Health Briefing

During today's briefing, Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced 45 new cases of COVID-19 in B.C., bringing the total to date to 1,336 confirmed cases. Currently 135 people are hospitalized throughout the province as a result of the virus, with 61 patients in critical care, and 838 people fully recovered. In the Vancouver Coastal Health region, there have been 615 confirmed cases since the pandemic began. Although there are no new outbreaks to report in long-term care facilities, they continue to be a focus of our work. Dr. Henry reported five more



deaths in B.C. since yesterday; two of them were at Amica Edgemont Village, and one more was at Lynn Valley Care Centre. Two other people died in hospital. Our hearts are with their friends and family, and with all the loved ones of those who have died.

Earlier today, Premier John Horgan announced that every traveller returning to B.C. from abroad will now be required to present a formal self-isolation plan to provincial and federal authorities before they are allowed into the province. The new legal requirement is effective immediately at land borders, as well as Vancouver International Airport. Travellers' plans must show, in detail, that they have supports in place to safely self-isolate for 14 days. The plans will have to be approved by authorities before passengers can move forward. Those who do not have a plan will be sent to a "quarantine site" until they make one.

VCH Medical Health Officers, our provincial partners and the Public Health Agency of Canada continue to actively monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect yourself while out in public, wash your hands frequently and maintain social distance. Anyone who has symptoms — including a fever, cough, sneezing, sore throat, or difficulty breathing — should self-isolate for 10 days. Patients with COVID-19, or clinical illness compatible with COVID-19, should seek medical care if symptoms do not improve 5-7 days following symptom onset.

New Testing Guidelines

VCH Public Health distributed a new Physicians' Update today that reflects updated guidelines and expanded capacity for COVID-19 testing in the province. As of April 8, any physician can now order a test for COVID-19 based on their clinical judgement. The Physicians' Update recommends testing for the following groups if they develop a fever (over 38 degrees Celsius) and new onset (or exacerbation of chronic) cough or shortness of breath:

- Health care workers, including community pharmacists
- Residents of remote, isolated or Indigenous communities
- People living in congregate settings, such as work camps, correctional facilities, shelters, group homes, assisted living and seniors' residences
- People who are homeless or have unstable housing
- Essential services providers, including first responders
- Returning travellers identified at a point of entry to Canada

Testing is also recommended for the following groups if they develop any respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, however mild:

- Residents and staff of long-term care facilities



- Patients requiring admission to hospital or likely to be admitted, including pregnant individuals in their third trimester, patients on hemodialysis, or cancer patients receiving radiation or chemotherapy
- Patients who are part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak as determined by the Medical Health Officer

People who are asymptomatic should not be tested for COVID-19. A self-assessment tool, developed with the BC Ministry of Health, will help determine whether you may need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. Find it at covid19.thrive.health, or download a self-assessment app for smartphones.

For more information and latest updates on COVID-19, follow the BC Centre for Disease Control on Twitter @CDCofBC or visit the website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>

