

Daily Update – August 21, 2020

Ministry of Health update

At yesterday's Ministry of Health briefing, Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, and Dr. Réka Gustafson, B.C.'s deputy provincial health officer, reported 80 new cases of COVID-19 in B.C. for a total of 4,825 cases in British Columbia since the pandemic began. Of those, 1,526 cases have been in the Vancouver Coastal Health region. There are 780 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, 2,574 people who are under active public health monitoring as a result of identified exposure to known cases, and 3,845 people who tested positive have recovered. Currently, 11 people are hospitalized in B.C. with COVID-19, four of whom are in intensive care. In total, eight long-term care or assisted-living facilities and one acute-care facility have active outbreaks. There continue to be community exposure events, including in Vancouver Coastal Health, and on flights into and out of British Columbia. Check the Vancouver Coastal Health [Public Exposures](#) page for the locations and times of known possible exposures to COVID-19 to the public in our region.

Where transmission happens

Dr. Gustafson said science has shown us that regardless of where we may be in our province and what we may be doing, crowded indoor gatherings that encourage close proximity, especially those surrounded by people we do not know and involve alcohol, are a clear source of transmission. The data show us that small, indoor gatherings differ from controlled settings, such as an office or classroom, where you know who is in the space and can more easily take precautions to protect yourself and those around you.

New COVID-19 testing sites open in VCH

Identifying new cases of COVID-19 in a timely manner is important to help prevent community spread of the virus; on Wednesday we opened a new testing site in Vancouver to provide increased screening and testing. Located in the north parking lot of Vancouver Community College, on East 7th Avenue between Keith and Glen Drive, the site is open daily from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. It can accommodate both walk-in and drive-through clients. People visiting the new Vancouver COVID-19 testing site will not need a referral or appointment, and will be seen on a first-come, first-serve basis. Assessment for testing, if indicated, will be conducted for those with symptoms of COVID-19. An additional assessment centre in North Vancouver is expected to open soon and operating hours in Richmond and other locations will increase. For current site locations and hours, please refer to the [collection site locator](#) on the BC Centre for Disease Control website.

VCH launches COVID-safety campaign for young adults

Although the number of COVID-19 cases in the Vancouver Coastal Health region is down among the seniors who are most impacted by it, the disease is still gaining ground in millennials in the Vancouver Coastal Health region. According to data compiled by VCH's Public Health Surveillance Unit, people aged 20-39 represent the biggest increase of cases in the region since Phase 3 of BC's Restart Plan began on June 24, and now make up 56 per cent of our cases. In an effort to reach millennials and those younger, Vancouver Coastal Health has launched a new campaign that includes a series of [COVID-safe summer guides](#) posted on social media and online with tips for visiting restaurants, getting together with friends, playing recreational sports, going on road trips, going to the beach, and COVID-safe sex. A poster campaign and a [TikTok video series](#) of do's and don'ts are also aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. Dr. Patricia Daly, Chief Medical Health Officer for Vancouver Coastal Health, said: "We want people to get out and enjoy summer with their friends, but we can't forget that COVID-19 is still in our communities. By following public health guidance, we can help limit the spread of the virus and protect those most vulnerable to severe disease."

New enforcement measures

Also today, Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, announced new measures to enforce COVID-19 public safety. Police and other provincial enforcement officers are being given the ability to issue \$2,000 violation tickets for owners or organizers contravening the provincial health officer's (PHO) order on gatherings and events. They will also be able to issue \$200 violation tickets to individuals not following the direction of police or enforcement staff at events or who refuse to comply with requests to follow PHO orders or safe operating procedures, or respond with abusive behaviour.

Effective immediately, these new measures are enacted under the provincial state of emergency, using the extraordinary powers of the Emergency Program Act (EPA) in ongoing support of B.C.'s COVID-19 response and Restart Plan. In addition to enabling action from police, the Province is enlisting compliance and enforcement staff from provincial ministries to support enforcement and help issue tickets for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes liquor, cannabis and gaming inspectors, community safety unit inspectors and conservation officers. The enforcement focus will be on \$2,000 fines to owners, operators and organizers for contraventions of the provincial health officer's order on gatherings and events. This includes hosting a private party or public event in excess of 50 people, failing to provide appropriate hand sanitation and washroom facilities, failing to provide sufficient space in the

venue for physical distancing, failing to obtain a list of names and contacts at large event or having more than five guests gathered in a vacation accommodation. [Read the news release on the BC Gov website.](#)

Testing

Anyone in the VCH region with cold, influenza or COVID-19-like symptoms, however mild, can now be assessed for and get a COVID-19 test. Contact your physician or nurse practitioner's office, or a local community collection centre to arrange for a test. Phone numbers and locations of collection centre can be found by visiting: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing> or by calling 8-1-1. In Vancouver, the City Centre and REACH urgent and primary care centres can provide testing as well as the St. Vincent's drive-up location at 4875 Heather Street. The Richmond Assessment Centre is located at 6820 Gilbert Road, in the parking lot of the Richmond Tennis Club. On the North Shore, testing is available at the North Vancouver Urgent and Primary Care Centre. If you think you need testing, please call ahead before visiting your doctor, urgent and primary care center or health clinic.

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. For more information on COVID-19, please visit www.vch.ca/COVID19.

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/>.

