

Daily update – March 21, 2020

The emphasis in today's Ministry of Health briefing was to remind the public about the risk of COVID-19 in all of our communities. Cases are not confined to the healthcare sector but are out in the community. That's why the province has put in place drastic measures and is requiring people to practice social distancing. Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry issued a new order requiring personal service establishments (such as salons, spas, massage parlours and tattoo shops) to close until further notice.

Dr. Henry announced 74 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in British Columbia, bringing the total to 424 in the province. To date, 230 of those cases have been in the Vancouver Coastal Health region. Most of the cases are recovering in isolation at home; provincially, six people have recovered and received clearance from testing, 27 people are being cared for in hospitals, with 12 of them in intensive care. There has been one additional death connected to the outbreak at Lynn Valley Care Centre Lodge, bringing the total to 10 deaths in B.C.

Vancouver Coastal Health is working closely with the Ministry of Health and B.C.'s other health authorities to protect seniors living in long-term care homes. VCH is adopting the advice of Ministry of Health to:

- Temporarily suspend inter-facility transfers, except in circumstances of intolerable risk;
- Prioritize admission to long-term care from acute care over those from community where possible;
- Temporarily suspend all health authority operated/funded home & community care adult day programs and;
- Temporarily suspend the provision of in-facility respite, except in circumstances of intolerable risk.

A Public Health Order has also been issued by VC today, which:

- Prohibits long-term care staff and volunteers (with the exception of physicians, paramedics and laboratory technicians) from working at more than one health care facility;



- Requires facilities to deny access to all visitors to the facility, with the limited exception of the immediate family members and spiritual advisor of residents who are clinically assessed to be at the end of their lives;
- Prohibits resident transfers between health care facilities unless approved by a Medical Health Officer;
- Requires facilities to carry out enhanced cleaning of facilities and enhanced screening of staff, contractors and visitors, and to adhere to higher standards for notification of cold and flu-like illnesses;
- Cancels or postpones indefinitely all group social activities.

The Province of British Columbia announced today actions to protect vulnerable people, including those experiencing homelessness. The actions include a ban on evictions for non-payment of rent at BC Housing-funded buildings, development of protocols and identification of sites for support isolation for vulnerable people experiencing homelessness and those in single room occupancy and should housing buildings, supports for service providers and procurement of critical supplies needed by frontline workers.

VCH Medical Health Officers, our provincial partners and the Public Health Agency of Canada continue to actively monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly urge anyone who has symptoms—including a fever, cough, sneezing, sore throat, or difficulty breathing—to self-isolate for 10 days. To protect yourself while out in public, wash your hands frequently and maintain social distance. Testing is available for people with respiratory symptoms who are hospitalized, or likely to be hospitalized, including pregnant women in their third trimester; health-care workers; residents of long-term care facilities; or part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak. A new 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.

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/>

