



Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer

NORTH ISLAND

250.331.8591

Charmaine Enns
MD MHSc FRCPC
355-11th Street
Courtenay, BC V9N 1S4

CENTRAL ISLAND

250.739.6304

Mike Benusic
MD MPH CCFP
3rd Floor, 6475 Metral Drive
Nanaimo, BC V9T 2L9

COWICHAN AREA

250.850.2100

Local 45528

Shannon Waters
MD MHSc FRCPC
4th floor
238 Government St
Duncan, BC V9L 1A5

SOUTH ISLAND

250.519.3406

Richard Stanwick,
CMHO
MD MSc FRCPC FAAP

Murray Fyfe
MD MSc FRCPC

Dee Hoyano
MD FRCPC CCFP

430-1900 Richmond Avenue
Victoria, BC V8R 4R2

After Hours On Call

1.800.204.6166

MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS' NEWSLETTER

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COVID-19 Update #8

Thank you all for your collaboration, comments, and suggestions as our response to the pandemic continues. This newsletter will highlight a few current issues actively being addressed and provide a situational assessment.

Call Centre & Testing:

- The COVID-19 Call Centre is facing a sustained surge in call volume, resulting in long waits and some dropped calls (note: those with dropped calls are being called back, and the caller ID may show as another province). The call centre team is working hard to remedy this situation – new staff have been on-boarded, the platform is being upgraded, and a health-care worker triage system is being implemented.
- Testing sites are increasing their capacity in response to dynamic demands. For instance, the Nanaimo Public Health Unit has doubled its daily capacity for the week to maintain same-day bookings.
- Turn-around time for swabs remains quick with an average of less than 24h. Island Health labs have capacity to run more than double the current tests submitted daily (capacity of 740 on weekdays). Community physicians can collect swabs by following BCCDC guidance (http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/BCCDC_PHL_Updated_nCoV_Lab_Guidance.pdf) and submitting the specimen and completed requisition to an Island Health lab site (<https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/medical-laboratory-locations>).

Situational assessment:

- The incidence rate of COVID-19 has increased within Island Health, however, the absolute increase is small. In July, there were 0.5 cases/million/day, and the rate so far in August is 0.9 cases/million/day. Comparably, BC's current rate is 15.3 cases/million/day – attributable to recent cases being concentrated in the Lower Mainland. The rate of hospitalizations and deaths remain low across BC, with no current hospitalizations within Island Health. This is likely attributable to the shift in case demographics to primarily 20-40 year olds.
- 300-350 tests are being performed a day, and the current 7-day average percent positivity is 0.2%. Comparably, BC's recent percent positivity is 2.3%.
- COVID-19 cases continue to be contacted **well within 24h** by one of Island Health's 3 Communicable Disease Hubs upon notification of a positive test result, and contacts are typically traced and managed within 24 hours as well. Cases and contacts receive daily follow-up until they have successfully completed required periods of self-isolation or quarantine, respectively.
- There has been a rise in the proportion of cases with no known source of infection. The majority of these have had travel to the Lower Mainland during their incubation period, making acquisition off-island likely. There is no current concern for sustained community transmission anywhere within Island Health.

Resources:

- One-stop-shop for medical staff at medicalstaff.islandhealth.ca/covid-19, includes links to guidelines, resources, and communications
- Surveillance:
 - Island Health: <https://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/covid-19/outbreaks-and-exposures>: by Health Service Delivery Area and exposure history, updated when a new case is reported, also lists outbreaks and exposures of COVID-19 within Island Health (currently none)
 - BCCDC: [bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data](https://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data): all of BC and by Health Authority, updated every weekday