

Critical COVID-19 News

Information medical staff

March 22 at 4:55 p.m.

Sent on behalf of Dr. Maureen O'Donnell & Susan Wannamaker

Chief medical officer and chief operating officer of PHSA's COVID-19 EOC

We are all in this together. Every single one of us is playing a critical role in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we embark on the coming week, we want to share some of the thank you messages that health care workers are receiving from people around the province.

- Outside of the Children's & Women's campus, sidewalk chalk has been used to [sketch a message of thanks](#) to health care workers.
- Inspired from videos around the world, people in Vancouver have started a [7 p.m. round of applause](#) from their balconies to recognize the efforts of health care workers.
- A Vancouver orchestra [dedicated a musical message of hope and thanks](#) to medical professionals to health care workers.
- Social media posts to thank and celebrate our many team members continue to pour in through our [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) channels.

These messages of gratitude extend to each and every one of you – you all play a critical role in our response to COVID-19. Share any heartwarming messages of thanks from your community by emailing phsacomm@phsa.ca.

Our daily bulletins contain the latest workforce information. **Please read them carefully.**

Highlights:

Breaking news from government:

1. **Prime Minister recalls Parliament**

Other important updates:

2. **Providing care safely: Perspective from Dr. Réka Gustafson**
3. **Correction to PHAC advice: Reduced time for self-isolation following resolution of symptoms**
4. **Upcoming virtual town hall for medical staff**

Prime Minister recalls Parliament

- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [announced today](#) that the House of Commons has been recalled in order to introduce urgent economic measures, as part of Canada's \$82 billion response to support workers and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The quick passage of this legislation is important to ensure Canadians have the financial support needed during this crisis.
- The House is expected to meet on Tuesday, March 24, at 12 p.m. Eastern Time (ET).

Providing care safely: Perspective from Dr. Réka Gustafson

Dr. Réka Gustafson is becoming a familiar face across PHSA. She serves as our Vice President of Public Health & Wellness and as Deputy Provincial Health Officer, and is frequently featured as a subject matter expert at PHSA's COVID-19 virtual town halls. On behalf of PHSA's Executive Leadership Team and her colleagues in public health, she shares the following perspective:

- COVID-19 is a community-transmitted infection and health care workers are part of the community.
- At this time, COVID-19 testing is focusing on health care workers, which means we will have positive tests among health care workers.
- When there is a positive COVID-19 test in a health care worker, as always, your clinical leaders, infection control, occupational health, and public health will work together to support you and your colleagues with expert advice.
- Decisions are not black and white, and they will consider each case individually to ensure safe care. Some staff may be asked to self-isolate, while others who have no symptoms will be able to work with appropriate protections. These types of processes are no different than with any other infection that you and your colleagues have managed in the past.
- As the epidemic changes, advice may also change, and your clinical leaders, local infection control, occupational health and public health teams will provide you the most up-to-date advice available.

Correction to PHAC advice: Reduced time for self-isolation following resolution of symptoms

Yesterday's bulletin omitted language about the ability of "essential" health care workers to return to work wearing a mask, following international travel. We apologize for any confusion. **Please see highlighted text below** for an update to yesterday's bulletin.

- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has issued updated advice about when to return to work following periods of self-isolation due to illness and/or international travel. This advice is supported by B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer. **What follows supersedes all previous guidance.**
- For those employees, physicians and paramedics who are continuing to report to their normal places of work because it has been deemed essential for them to do so to provide direct patient care and/or to support those providing direct patient care, these PHAC guidelines apply to you when returning to work:
- **Following illness:** The time required for self-isolation of cases (confirmed or clinical) where symptoms have resolved has been **reduced to 10 days** from the onset of symptoms (infectious period).
 - After 10 days, if your temperature is normal and you feel well, you can return to routine activities.
 - Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to self-isolate beyond 10 days.

- On day 10, if you continue to have symptoms other than a cough, please continue self-isolating until symptoms have resolved.
- Please seek medical care if respiratory symptoms worsen.
- **Following international travel:** The time required for self-isolation of returning travellers or contacts **remains at 14 days** (incubation period).
 - Returning travellers who develop respiratory symptoms within 14 days of return will be considered “clinical COVID-19” cases and their contacts managed in the same way as laboratory confirmed cases.
 - Health care workers who meet the above description of “essential” are permitted to return to work following international travel provided they are asymptomatic and wear a surgical mask for 14 days following travel.
- All of the above advice should be considered in the context of PHSA’s recent directive to support as many employees as possible to work from home. Meaning, if you are an employee who is already working from home, this advice about when to return to the workplace does not apply.

Upcoming virtual town hall for medical staff

- Our next medical staff teleconference will be **Monday, March 23 from 7-7:45 a.m.** Lines will be available on a first come, first served basis.
 - 1-877-291-3022 (toll free, province-wide)
 - 604-681-0455 (Vancouver)
 - Participant access code: 4478028 #
- Continue to send in your questions via [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com) using the event code **#PHSAMedicalStaff**. If you see a question posted that resonates with you, or is similar to your question, please ‘like’ it to help us prioritize.

Thank you for your continued dedication

The service that each and every one of you offers for our patients and families – and the essential support you provide to our provincial systems – is critical, and is making a meaningful difference in B.C.

Your ongoing sources of information

- We are sending daily updates. Watch for emails from phsacomm@phsa.ca.
- Continue to check the [BCCDC’s website](#) as a trusted source of information.
- We have opened up a [new staff COVID-19 section on phsa.ca](#) where employees can access the same information that is posted on POD, but when off the network.
- BCEHS alerts and updates are on the [BCAS intranet](#) and in the [BCEHS Handbook](#). *[Note: you must be on the BCEHS network to access these links].*
- For site-specific questions, please check in with your manager or clinical leadership.
- For trusted information from around the world, please check the [World Health Organization website](#).