

Nov 18, 2021

To: Vancouver Island North Local Health Area Communities

**Re: Increased COVID-19 activity in Vancouver Island North Local Health Area**

Over the past 2 weeks, there has been an uptick in detected COVID-19 cases in the Vancouver Island North Local Health Area. This has understandably resulted in anxiety for many community members. However, Public Health is not observing evidence of widespread community transmission. Rather, the vast majority of cases are linked to known cases and clusters and are typically the result of close contact in households. It is also important to understand that the availability and high uptake of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines has dramatically reduced severe outcomes related to COVID-19 infection and has provided the path out of this pandemic.

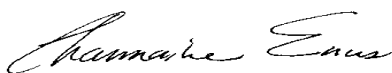
The purpose of COVID-19 vaccine is not to eliminate infections, rather to decrease serious outcomes from the infection - severe disease, hospitalizations and death. A large percentage of fully vaccinated people will not get COVID-19 when exposed to someone who is infectious. For the small number of fully vaccinated individuals who do become symptomatic from COVID-19 infection, they will most likely have mild symptoms and are less able to transmit the virus to others. Public health recommendations are evolving as we move to new phases of this pandemic. Fully vaccinated close contacts are no longer asked to self-isolate, instead being asked to self-monitor for symptoms and get tested if symptoms develop. We encourage fully vaccinated close contacts to return to normal daily activities such as going to school and work. Your local health care providers and public health professionals will provide the needed recommendations and direction to individuals or locations if an intervention is required. Essentially, if you are not directed to self-isolate or seek testing and you are not experiencing symptoms, you can carry on with life as normal!

The population and health care providers are to be congratulated on the efforts that have resulted in a high uptake of vaccine in the region. 86% of the population 12 years and older in the Vancouver Island North Local Health Area have received at least one dose of vaccine, and 80% of those 12 and up are fully immunized. These rates are good, but in order to get in front of COVID-19 transmission, especially due to the delta variant, we need a vaccination rate of 90% or greater.

For adults who are not vaccinated, COVID-19 remains a very serious infection. If you are an unvaccinated adult you are 10x more likely to become infected, 57x more likely to be hospitalized and 47x more likely to die from COVID-19. I strongly urge unvaccinated adults to not only consider their own health but the health of their loved ones, friends and community by limiting the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission through being vaccinated.

Experience from other regions has shown that the uptick in cases will subside, but it is important to know that we will continue to hear of cases in our communities. We can learn to live with this virus as we have done with other vaccine-preventable respiratory infections by getting vaccinated, staying home when ill with fever and cough and following current public health guidance and recommendations.

Yours in health,



Charmaine Enns, MD, MHSc, FRCPC  
Medical Health Officer