

March 12, 2020

**RE: COVID-19 and long-term care homes**

Dear residents and families:

COVID-19, previously known as the “novel coronavirus,” is getting increasing attention as the number of cases worldwide is changing quickly. While B.C. has confirmed cases of coronavirus, the risk to B.C. residents is low.

You may have heard about long-term care homes recently identified with cases of COVID-19. Full infection prevention and control precautions are in place to protect both residents and staff who are not affected.

Understandably, there may be concern among other families who have family members in long-term care homes. I would like to reassure you that we are well prepared to manage COVID-19. Vancouver Coastal Health is working with all long-term care homes to undertake surveillance for any potential cases of influenza-illness and we promptly institute testing and response. If we were to see cases elsewhere, we can put in appropriate measures.

It is safe to visit your relative. There are no restrictions to visiting in any long-term care facility within the region. We remind friends and families to follow these simple but important steps to prevent to introduction of any virus into a long-term care facility:

- please do not visit if you have symptoms of cold or flu;
- please remember to wash your hands or use the alcohol-based sanitizer when you enter and leave the facility; and,
- please restrict your visit to your own relative.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness. It can spread through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes or touching the virus with your hands then touching your face before washing your hands. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing. Most people will experience mild illness. For general information about COVID-19 call 811, or visit HealthLinkBC: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

For more information please check out this informative video on the Vancouver Coastal Health YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/9N6SZ4WFJN8> and information on our web site <http://www.vch.ca/about-us/news/vancouver-coastal-health-statement-on-coronavirus>

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Patricia Daly MD, FRCPC  
Vice-President, Public Health and Chief Medical Health Officer  
Vancouver Coastal Health