



Renfrew County and District Health Unit
"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

For Immediate Release

(Pembroke, Ontario, September 13, 2020)

A personal note from Dr. Cushman about COVID-19

We have had more cases in the last month than in the previous three months. Worse, this weekend we could possibly be witnessing our first serious community outbreak in Renfrew County and District (RCD).

Yes, we all have COVID-19 fatigue, but this is a marathon and we are in a key phase with new challenges. If we want schools to stay open and the economy to progress, we must recognize that individual vigilance and strict observance of public health recommendations are imperative. This is not the time to let down our guard but rather just the opposite.

The latest concerns about a school and a gym are a stark demonstration of how quickly things could go wrong. Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) has identified more than 100 potential contacts since Friday. Our nurses are assessing individual situations and offering the appropriate advice. Strategic rather than blanket testing is essential. To get timely results, we must not overload the lab. Hopefully the around the clock work by our dedicated team can prevent or at least limit an outbreak.

Speaking of schools, let's use this as a teaching moment to remind ourselves how each and every one of us should conduct ourselves in the time of COVID-19.

First of all, **if you are sick, stay home. Don't go to work.** Equally important, have a "low bar" for COVID-19. The symptoms can mimic anything and everything, including health problems you may have had in the past. **Do not make your own diagnosis, leave that to the health professionals and to the testing.** Make arrangements through the Renfrew County Virtual Triage Assessment Centre (RCVTAC).

Secondly, if you are sick and are being tested, those in your immediate household should also stay at home and monitor themselves for symptoms while awaiting the result of your test.

Bubbles, bubbles, and bubbles. Keep them small, limit your social activities. We have seen all too well for example, what gyms, barbeques, bars, and parties can do. Recently in Ottawa, one individual who was sick resulted in 40 individuals testing positive for COVID-19 from a number of different households and other settings. All from one party! It can happen here too!

We need to constantly practice the fundamentals: handwashing, physical distancing, masking and be sure to:

- Clean your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then clean your hands.
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve and then clean your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, unless you have just cleaned your hands.
- If you are ill, stay home.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Get your flu shot.

Lastly, knowing **what to do if you have been exposed** to COVID-19 is another way to protect yourself and your community. The [COVID Alert App](#), available from the Ontario and Canadian Governments can be download onto your phone and it will notify you if you have been in contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. This tool can protect you, and it will help the public health nurses to do the best contact tracing possible. I highly recommend that you take-a-look at it and give it your serious consideration.

This is no time for complacency or distraction, but rather a time to renew our commitment to protecting RCD through strict adherence to the guidelines we all know well. We are in this together. Each and every one of us must do our part.

If you think you may have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, first [self-isolate](#) and then use [Ontario's Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see if you need to seek further care.

For more information about the COVID-19 Testing Schedule visit the RCVTAC website at <https://rcvtac.ca/> or call 1-844-727-6404. For all other information, visit RCDHU's website at <https://www.rcdhu.com/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-2/> or call 613-735-8654 or 1-800-267-1097.

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