



**Renfrew County and District Health Unit**  
“Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District”

## For Immediate Release

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(Pembroke, Ontario, 11:30 a.m., May 20, 2021)

### **Importance of Contact Tracing in Stopping the Spread of COVID-19**

While the COVID-19 vaccine roll out in Renfrew County and District (RCD) continues to progress at a successful pace with over 50% of adults 18 years of age and older having received at least one dose, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) is still seeing high case numbers from outdoor gatherings and workplaces.

Dr. Robert Cushman, Acting Medical Officer of Health, RCDHU, wants to commend residents for their efforts in the fight against COVID-19, but he is urging residents to take precautions seriously. “We must continue to wear our masks, physically distance, practice proper hand hygiene and follow the stay-at-home order set by the province,” states Dr. Cushman. “We are experiencing increasing difficulty with contact tracing as many individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are not being honest about where they have been or how many contacts they have interacted with,” says Dr. Cushman.

“This is concerning as contact tracing is key to stopping the spread of COVID-19,” states Dr. Cushman. It is a process which identifies, notifies, educates, and monitors individuals who have had close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. As these individuals are at higher risk of becoming infected, contact tracing helps high risk contacts understand their risk and limit further spread of the virus by notifying them that they have been exposed to COVID-19 and must immediately self-isolate. This process allows RCDHU to determine if there is a threat to the community or if the exposure has been contained (i.e., to a workplace, school, or facility).

“If we hope to return to normalcy sooner than later, residents must follow protocols put in place. While we are still fighting COVID-19, the virus has evolved, and the new variants of concern (VOCs) thrive on any breach in precautions. This is why it is so important that we all wait to gather for a while longer. We need more vaccines in arms, and if we want to ensure that our loved ones are there when this is over, we must remember that we don’t gather now, so that when we do gather, no one is missing,” continued Dr. Cushman.

This is also a reminder that the [Section 22 Order](#) put in place on Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, by Dr. Cushman requires all residents of RCD, to immediately begin self-isolation if they:

- are a confirmed case or probable case of COVID-19;
- have signs and symptoms of COVID-19, have been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting

- the results of their test;
- believe they now have one or more symptoms (even mild symptoms) of COVID-19; or
- are a close contact of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 or are a close contact of a person identified as a probable case of COVID-19.

The Section 22 Order was issued to ensure that community transmission of COVID-19 is minimized or eliminated. For details on what a close contact is and for further instructions on self-isolation, visit the RCDHU [Section 22 Order](#) for Self-Isolation.

**If you are a high risk contact:**

- You MUST [self-isolate](#) and [self-monitor](#) for symptoms for 14 days. Do NOT return to work, school or child care, in-person;
- Call the Renfrew County Virtual Triage Assessment Centre (RC VTAC) at 1-844-727-6404 to book an appointment for testing;
- If test result is negative, continue 14-day isolation because of exposure and because COVID-19 could have been developing (incubating) at time of test;
- If test result is positive, continue to self-isolate and you will be contacted by RCDHU.

**If you have been directed to self-isolate, you are required to:**

- Stay home. Do not go to work, school, child care, or public places. You can go outside, but you must stay on your own property. Do not walk around the neighbourhood.
- Avoid contact with others. No visitors unless deemed essential (e.g. care providers), stay in a separate room away from other people within your household, use a separate bathroom if possible.
- If these steps are not possible, maintain a distance of 2 metres from others at all times.
- Keep your distance. If you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of at least 2 metres and wear a mask or face covering that covers your nose and mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

RCDHU is reminding residents to complete the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) or [COVID-19 school and child care self-assessment tool](#) **daily** if you go to work or daycare, to monitor for symptoms and proper guidance.

For more information, visit RCDHU's website at <https://www.rcdhu.com/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-2/> or call 613-732-3629 or 1-800-267-1097.