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January 9, 2025

Re: Viral Respiratory Illness Season in British Columbia

Dear Colleagues,

Every year in our province, viral respiratory illnesses (VRI) cause or contribute to significant morbidity and mortality across the population. In recent weeks, epidemiological data show increases in the transmission of influenza and RSV infections in our communities, and COVID-19 infections remain at moderate levels.

This trend is an important indicator that VRI season is underway in BC, that the peak of the season is likely yet to occur, and that we all have a role to play to prevent further transmission and protect those who are most vulnerable to these illnesses.

Immunization remains an effective building block of protection from severe disease and complications throughout VRI season; getting immunized with updated vaccines for influenza and COVID-19 provides good protection for us and those around us. As VRIs circulate throughout the province, covering coughs and sneezes, cleaning hands regularly, and staying home when sick are meaningful measures that, when practiced, enhance protection against VRIs at an individual and population level.

Health care facilities are implementing additional measures, including masking, to help reduce transmission in these settings during this period when risk is highest.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting our patients, residents, staff, and loved ones.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Henry
OBC, MD, MPH, FRCPC
Provincial Health Officer