

Centro Medical COVID-19 Update

March 29, 2020

Welcome to our 2nd clinic-wide COVID-19 update.

First and foremost, we would like to reiterate the importance of social distancing, which **has been proven to be the most effective method of slowing down the spread and is the best prevention advice we can offer our patients and their families.**

Physicians in Vancouver, and across the country are on the frontlines in the battle against COVID-19. This crisis is unlike anything we have experienced in our lifetime. We are working flat out to be there for our patients and their families. Doctors cannot do this alone. What the public does now will impact the health of British Columbians the weeks and months ahead. Lives depend on your actions now.

- ***The time to act is now. Our province is in a state of emergency. What we do today will impact the health of British Columbians in the weeks to come.***

Here is the directive from our Provincial Health Officer, Dr Bonnie Henry:

- Stay home unless absolutely necessary. No dinner parties. No shopping. No sports, not even outside. Instead, have coffee with a friend online.
- Keep six feet or two metres away from everyone at all times. That's about the width of a car or the length of two arms stretched out. Call your loved ones and tell them to do the same.
- Remind young people in your life that they can get sick from this virus. More importantly, they can be carriers and cause a lot of harm to parents, grandparents, and other loved ones.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Tell your loved ones to do the same.

We can do this, but we can't wait one more hour or one more day. Let's save lives, together.

Secondly, as mentioned in the previous clinic-wide update (March 17, 2020), we have made changes to how patients are seen at Centro Medical as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes are to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission at the clinic and to reduce the volume of non-essential calls and visits to allow our staff and clinicians to spend time assessing the most urgent cases, and limiting physical contact between patients, staff and physicians as much as possible.

Although we have modified the hours which our clinic is physically open, our clinic staff will be able to answer your telephone calls during our regular office hours. We will still have a physician available in the office as needed for essential and urgent in-person appointments. **Thank you**

for your patience with our staff and physicians during this time. We have transitioned to a work-from-home model for the majority of our staff, which is an unprecedented move, and we are trying our best to adapt to this new situation.

- **Use of Telemedicine (Video conference and telephone visits).**
 - As of Tuesday, March 17, 2020, we have switched all our appointments to VIDEO conference or PHONE appointments for ALL appointments which can be done remotely.
 - All new appointments, whether booked by phone or using our online booking system will be booked as VIDEO or PHONE appointments. **After your video or phone appointment, if your doctor believes you must be seen in person, the doctor will book an in-office visit with you directly.**
 - i. **VIDEO appointment:** Your physician will email you shortly before your appointment is booked with instructions for using doxy.me or Zoom video conferencing platforms. Please go to the website on the email and sign in to the virtual waiting room. A computer or laptop with a strong Wi-Fi signal and camera is best for video conferencing if you have this capability.
 - ii. **PHONE appointment:** Your physician will call you at the same time your appointment is booked. Please change your phone settings to accept "unidentified callers" as the call may come from a "blocked caller ID".
 - You do not need to do anything except to make sure you are by your computer or phone at that time. Please be patient if you need to wait in a queue as your doctor will have a full roster of telemedicine patients.

- **Consent for Electronic Communications:** Please see a link to our Electronic Communications consent form on our website (www.centromedical.ca). Thank you for submitting this consent form to allow us to communicate with you electronically.

- **If you are feeling sick or you are concerned about COVID-19 exposure:**
 - **PLEASE do NOT come to the clinic sick** – you will be asked to leave. We need to be able to adequately prepare to treat you and keep everyone else safe.
 - If you are feeling sick, or are worried about COVID-19 exposure, please make a new telemedicine appointment (video or phone visit) and you will be able to speak to a doctor about your symptoms. They will help you decide what next steps are needed.
 - If you have health concerns, call our office and book a telemedicine visit with your physician, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.
 - ****If you are having trouble breathing or are extremely unwell, and cannot wait for a phone appointment, you should seek emergency health services at a hospital****

- **Canceling or postponing NON-ESSENTIAL appointments:**

- If you have access to the online booking system, please consider self-canceling any non-essential appointments.
 - There will be no charges for canceled appointments related to these changes.
 - If you are not sure if your appointment is essential or not, please keep your existing appointment as a video/phone appointment and you can review with your care provider without making any extra calls to our office.
- **Here is a (non-exhaustive) list of ESSENTIAL visits requiring in-office assessment:**
 - Newborn examinations (babies under 2 weeks old)
 - Infant checkups and vaccinations (at 2, 4, 6 months and 1 year of age). All other infant and well-child visits/checkups may be done virtually for an initial assessment during the COVID19 pandemic.
 - Prenatal visits - please speak with your physician as there is a modified prenatal schedule to limit the number of in-office appointments.
 - Any visit requiring urgent/essential physical examination as determined by your physician. After your video or phone visit, if your doctor believes you must be seen in person, the doctor will book an in-office visit with you directly.
- **Work absence:** As per instructions from the Minister of Health and the provincial Medical Officer of Health, we will not be providing notes for work absence. If necessary, consider showing your employer this letter:

<https://centromedical.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BCCDC-COVID-19-Employer-Sick-Note.pdf>
- **COVID-19 testing:** We will be adhering to the COVID19 testing guidelines provided by the BC Centre for Disease Control and Vancouver Coastal Health. Please check this website/app to help determine whether you need COVID19 testing: [BC COVID 19](#)
- **Travel Advisory Notice:** All Canadians should avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada, including to the United States. Anyone choosing to travel will be required to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival. Returning travellers that develop respiratory symptoms are also required to self-isolate for a period of **10 days after the onset of symptoms**, or when the symptoms resolve, whichever is later. As of March 25, 2020, this is *mandatory under the Quarantine Act*. You can find the BC CDC current travel update here: [Travel](#)
- **School Closures:** In-class instruction is currently suspended indefinitely in all Vancouver School Board schools and across the province of British Columbia. Further details are coming in April. Please checkout the [Vancouver School Board](#) website for the most recent updates.

Remember – in order to continue keeping the clinic safe for all patients, we have implemented the following policies:

- **No guests allowed in the clinic.** Patients are to come on their own, except if required for medical assistance or out of necessity (i.e. translation or a parent of a young child). All other individuals should wait outside the clinic, should be prepared to wait outside or in the car.
- Notify our Administration Staff by Phone if you are experiencing cough/fever/respiratory symptoms before coming into the clinic. They will book you for a video or phone visit with a physician.
- Safety in the Waiting Room – If your doctor determines that you should be seen in the office, you may be asked to wait in your car or outside.
- If you have fever and/or respiratory symptoms, please wear a mask if you have one, otherwise our front staff will supply you with a face mask when you arrive.
- Use Hand Sanitizer as you enter the clinic and as you move around the clinic.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Bring your own pen/pencil to record your own notes if required, i.e. weight and blood pressure, instead of using clinic supplies, to prevent spread of germs.

We know that this is a stressful time, and we are trying our best to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our patients.

Also, please watch our website for updates and advice, and check the BC CDC website for updates as well.

Centro Medical: www.centromedical.ca

BC Centre for Disease Control COVID19 information: [COVID-19](#)

Stay healthy and safe,

From All the Physicians at Centro Medical