



## April 29<sup>th</sup> CLBC Teleconference for Individuals and Families Plain Language Summary of Questions and Answers

### Who were the presenters answering questions on this call?

- Dr. Daniele Behn Smith, Deputy Provincial Health Officer
- Ross Chilton, CEO, Community Living BC

### Opening Remarks from Ross:

- We know the third wave has been stressful for everyone
- Over the last month we have worked to get letters out to the 24,000 people we support
- This letter gives instructions about how to register and book your vaccine
- If you did not get a letter- please let us know and we can work with you to make sure you get what you need to book your vaccine

### Opening Remarks from Dr. Behn Smith:

- We are in the third wave of the pandemic
- Case numbers are still high, but the curve seems to be flattening
- The main goal of the vaccine is to prevent severe illness and death from COVID
- We are already seeing the vaccine working- there has been an 80-85% reduction in death of people who get COVID
- Because there are still a lot of people getting COVID, we are now seeing younger people who are getting more severe illness and who need to go to hospital
- This creates a high stress on our health care system to be able to properly care for people who are sick
- This is why we still need to keep our bubble small, stay physically distant, reduce our travel, and continue all the same safety measures to reduce the spread of the virus.
- It is more important than ever to stay physically distant from people who are not part of your household bubble
- The *variants of concern* are one reason we are still seeing high number of cases.
- Variants make up about 70% of cases
- A *Variants of concern* means it:
  1. Spreads more easily
  2. Causes more severe illness
  3. Vaccine doesn't work as well

- Because of these *variants of concern*, we need to keep doing the things we know work to stop the spread of COVID
- We are in a critical time where vaccine program is going as fast as it can to keep communities safe from the virus
- We have seen the vaccine work really well with those communities that had outbreaks and were first on the list to get as many members vaccinated at once as possible
- We are hopeful that all adults who want the vaccine will have the chance to get it by the end of June

**Question-** We are hearing about areas of the province that are having more cases. What does it mean if I live in one of those ‘high risk communities’? Do I have to take extra precautions?

**Answer:**

- Yes, there are areas of BC that have more cases of COVID than others
- We ALL need to be following the same safety measures:
  - Keep social contacts small
  - Don’t visit indoors
  - Keep social interactions outdoors
  - Keep 2 metre physical distance
  - Wear a mask if you can’t keep physical distance

**Question-** Will the AstraZeneca give me blood clots? Shouldn’t I wait for a vaccine without this risk?

**Answer:**

- The best vaccine is the first vaccine offered to you
- We are very confident in the vaccine program and all the vaccine being offered.
- All the vaccines work to prevent severe illness from COVID
- In very rare cases some people got serious blood clots after getting the AstraZeneca vaccine
- The risk of getting a blood clot is far smaller than the risk of getting severe COVID
- The protection of the vaccine far outweighs the very small risk of blood clots

**Question-** What are the things I should be looking for after I get the shot? Should I be concerned if I get sick? How do I know if it worked?

- It can take 3 weeks after you get the shot for the vaccine to start working to protect you
- Some common side effects that are a sign that the vaccine is working include:
  - Sore arm
  - Headache
  - Fever
  - Nausea
- Symptoms like runny nose, cough, shortness of breath are NOT side effects. If you have those symptoms you should use the [COVID self assessment tool](#) or call 811
- Even after you get the vaccine, you can still pass COVID to other people
- Soon enough people will be vaccinated that we can start to loosen the safety measures
- Right now, we still have to follow the same rules to keep our health care system working to look after people who have severe COVID

**Question-** I have a support worker for my son who is choosing not to be vaccinated. Can I require the support worker to be vaccinated? If not, what do I do?

**Answer:**

- No. BC does not make any vaccine mandatory.
- People have the choice whether or not to get the vaccine.
- There are some places that may ask for proof of vaccination, but there always needs to be exceptions for people who cannot get or choose not to get the vaccine.
- If you and your son are vaccinated that is the most important thing you can do.
- As more and more people get the vaccine, we build up *community immunity* and that means even people who are not vaccinated will be also be less likely to get the virus.

**Question-** Now that it is summer, and more people are doing things together outside, what is the latest guidance and advice around wearing masks. Should we wear them outside?

**Answer:**

- We are still learning about the *variants of concern* and outdoor spread.
- The best protection from the virus is to keep a 2 metre distance between people even outside
- If you might be in contact with people outside closer than 2 metres, then it's a good idea to wear a mask as another layer of protection.
- Wind helps to move droplets around quickly which helps reduce the risk
- Sunlight will kill COVID which is another source of protection
- There is no risk of getting COVID by walking past someone outside

**Question-** *[This question comes from BC People First, a provincial organization representing self advocates]* We had a few members asking when they will be allowed to go for walks again? They are in care that only allows for 30-minute visits two days a week. The visits must take place on-site in a small room following distancing protocols understandably. But they would really like to go outdoors where it is safer to meet and get fresh air.

**Answer from Ross and Dr. Behn Smith:**

- It is a fair question to ask the agency staff, “Why the focus on indoor visits?”
- Combining visits with being physically distant outside is a safe way to see your loved ones.
- Be outside as much as you can.

**Question-** When will family members be allowed in person visits without the social distancing. My younger sister has Down Syndrome and is in the late stage of Alzheimer’s. I have not been allowed in her home for over a year and I’ve noticed a significant decline. I have had my first dose of my vaccination.

**Answer from Daniele and Ross:**

- We don’t yet have guidance about how we can reduce safety measures based on vaccination status. For example- what 2 vaccinated people will be able to do together.
- Once more people have the vaccine, we will provide direction on what 2 vaccinated people can do together.
- Remember it takes 3 weeks after getting the vaccine before you are protected.
- Service providers are trying to keep everyone safe, especially those who have higher risk of getting severe COVID.

**Question-** We are trying to follow public health measure like keeping to our bubble and not wanting to bring staff in. Will the flexible respite options from CLBC be extended so can get a break in other ways?

**Answer from Ross:**

- The interim flexible respite policy is in place until the end of August
- We will notify families 90 days in advance of this interim policy ending.
- We know families are tired. Use your respite now to get a break.

**Question-** What does community immunity mean? Is that when cases start to go down? When will we know if we have community immunity?

**Answer:**

- Right now, COVID is like wildfire spreading from person to person.
- *Community immunity* is when enough of us in BC have been vaccinated so that COVID gets stopped in its tracks.
- Once most people are vaccinated it will be very hard for COVID to spread.
- Remember, its not only about the number of cases. It's about the strain on our health care system if more people are getting severe COVID and need to go to hospital.

**Question-** Once everyone has their first vaccine in BC can we see our friends and start up things like special Olympics?

**Answer from Dr. Behn Smith and Ross:**

- COVID is a virus that is here to stay.
- We need to learn to live with it.
- It will take time to figure it out what we need to keep doing to keep COVID under control even after everyone has been vaccinated.
- But we do need to go back to those important community and social connections.
- There will be a time when we can gather together again in ways that are safe and keep COVID under control.
- In the meantime, remember to take advantage of what's out there. For example- Special Olympics is offering Tuesday and Thursday fitness classes.
- Visit the [Calendar for Connection](#) for more ways to stay socially connected during the pandemic.

**CLBC is committed to having another teleconference call for individuals and families in the coming weeks. Visit the CLBC website for more information and updates [here](#)**