

**COVID-19: Update #11  
Testing Criteria Update  
Returning Travellers Required to Quarantine  
Updated Health Care Worker (HCW) Recommendations for  
Testing/Quarantine/Self-isolation/Recovery  
Ontario Health PPE and Mask Use Recommendations and  
Critical PPE Supplies Escalation Process**

**Attention:** Physicians, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse Practitioners, EMS, Designated Officers, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies, Central LHIN, NSM LHIN, Beausoleil First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Rama First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Long-term Care Homes, Rest and Retirement Homes

**Date:** March 29, 2020

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To date, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health (SMDHU) has had [33 lab confirmed cases](http://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/topics/infectious-diseases/a-h/covid-19)  
<http://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/topics/infectious-diseases/a-h/covid-19>.

**Please note that recommendations from this HealthFax replace the HealthFax from March 25, 2020. Recommendations may change as the pandemic progresses.**

There is now evidence of increasing community transmission of COVID-19 (without a link to someone with confirmed COVID-19 or travel to an affected area), and it is forecasted to rise greatly for the next number of days/weeks, and to persist for weeks to months. Therefore, to decrease community transmission of COVID-19 infections during this crucial time:

- **Anyone except health care workers who have new cold-like/respiratory symptoms, such as sore throat, fever, myalgia, runny nose, cough, shortness of breath (regardless of travel history), and has not been tested for COVID-19, should self-isolate at home for 14 days.**
  - **If at 14 days, they do not have a fever and the symptoms are improving, they can come out of self-isolation.**
  - If symptoms or fever are persisting, they should follow-up with their primary care provider or Telehealth. The self-isolation handout is available at Public Health Ontario's website: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en>.
- Anyone except health care workers who have new cold-like/respiratory symptoms and have been tested but results are negative are advised to self-isolate until 24 hours after symptom resolution or 14 days after onset of symptoms, whichever is shorter, as long they don't have a fever and symptoms are improving.

**Moving forward, we will be using the term quarantine for individuals who are asked to self-isolate but do not have symptoms.** This is so that we can be more precise on why someone is self-isolating.



The incubation period is estimated to be between 2 and 14 days, with the median at 5 days. The period of communicability/contagiousness is not clear, but is currently assumed to be 48 hours before the onset of symptoms to 14 days. It is not clear how communicable the asymptomatic period is, but it is hypothesized that contagiousness is greater earlier in the symptomatic course i.e. first seven days vs last seven days of symptoms.

### **1.0 Testing Criteria (updated from previous health fax)**

At this time, the province is testing all specimens that are submitted. However, where there are shortages of testing supplies, the following groups should be **prioritized** for testing to inform public health and clinical management for these individuals:

- Symptomatic health care workers (regardless of care delivery setting) and staff who work in health care facilities
- Symptomatic residents and staff of long-term care facilities, retirement homes and other institutional settings e.g. homeless shelter
- Hospitalized patients-admitted with respiratory symptoms (new or exacerbated)
- Symptomatic members of remote, isolated, rural and/or indigenous communities
- Symptomatic travellers identified at a point of entry in Canada
- Persons referred by public health

**At this time, asymptomatic patients are recommended not to be tested, unless it is in follow-up to a previous positive test to clear them from self-isolation.** Availability of supplies is forecasted to improve in the coming days/weeks.

It is recommended that all those tested are reported to the Infectious Diseases Team at SMDHU during regular business hours (Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at 705-721-7520 ext. 8809, or preferably by faxing [the COVID-19 reporting form](#). SMDHU will follow-up with all negative samples.

### **2.0 Travellers Returning to Canada**

[The Government of Canada](#) has put in place emergency measures that require **mandatory 14-day self-isolation** for all persons entering Canada, even if they do not have COVID-19 symptoms.

- **Symptomatic Individuals Returning to Canada**

Anyone presenting with symptoms (including health care workers), will be required to immediately self-isolate in a place where they will not be in contact with vulnerable people such as older adults or individuals with underlying medical conditions.

- **Asymptomatic Individuals Returning to Canada**

Individuals who do not have symptoms are required to undergo quarantine and monitor for symptoms of cough, fever or difficulty breathing for 14 days after arrival. **Health care workers deemed critical to continued operations by all parties (employer, employee and public health) may be exempt from the [federal quarantine order](#), and to follow provincial direction as per <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html?topic=tilelink#f> and as outlined by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health. Please see Table 1, Page 5 of this HealthFax for further guidance.**

Additionally, the Ministry of Health released:

[COVID-19 Guidance: Occupational Health and Safety and Infection Prevention & Control:](#)  
[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019\\_occupational\\_health\\_safety\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_occupational_health_safety_guidance.pdf)

### **3.0 Health Care Worker Recommendations for Testing/Quarantine/Self-isolation/Recovery**

Health care workers with high-risk exposures (for example, provided direct care to a confirmed case without consistent use of appropriate PPE or household contact of a confirmed case) are to quarantine and self-monitor for signs and symptom for 14 days since the last day of exposure to the case.

**It is recommended that all symptomatic health care workers suspected of having COVID-19 (whether it is thought to be community-acquired or through a high-risk exposure) be advised to self-isolate immediately and be tested as soon as possible.**

**A summary of health care worker recommendations can be found in Table 1, Page 5 of this HealthFax.** The table will be available on the [SMDHU Health Professional Portal](http://www.smdhu.org/hpportal) at <http://www.smdhu.org/hpportal> under [COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control](#) and will be updated on the website as the pandemic progresses. Please check there for latest version.

### **4.0 Ontario Health PPE and Mask Use Recommendations and Critical PPE Supplies Escalation Process**

Ontario Health has produced a [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) use during the COVID-19 Pandemic](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-healthfax/personal-protective-equipment-(ppe)-use-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf?sfvrsn=0) document (including considerations for surgical mask recommendations for all patient encounters): [http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-healthfax/personal-protective-equipment-\(ppe\)-use-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-healthfax/personal-protective-equipment-(ppe)-use-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf?sfvrsn=0)

**We ask that you read pages 6 and 7, as it guides clinics, institutions and hospitals on the prioritization of the use of surgical/procedural masks. Given that there is now increasing community transmission in Simcoe-Muskoka, if supplies are available within your setting, surgical/procedural masks are recommended for all patient encounters for health care providers who provide direct care to patients. This includes encounters with asymptomatic patients.** The availability of masks do vary from setting to setting and therefore planning, prioritizing and judicious use of masks are essential. There is recognition that not all settings may be in a position to implement this recommendation. The use of eye protection, if available and increased handwashing would be recommended as well.

General guidelines when using surgical/procedural masks **with asymptomatic patients** during COVID-19 pandemic:

- A surgical mask can be used over the course of many patients. Conserve your mask for as long as possible, but once wet, damaged, soiled, or removed, you should immediately dispose of the mask. Take extra care when removing this mask as this is when self-contamination may occur. Don a new mask for your next set of patient encounters, extending its use for as long as possible. In some circumstances this may necessitate more than 2 masks/shift.
- It is safe to wear your mask for multiple patient encounters under these circumstances. This is not the usual recommendation during non-COVID-19 times. Take care not to touch your facemask, and if you do, immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Leave the patient care area to remove the facemask and perform hand hygiene afterwards.
- Take care not to touch your facemask, and if you do, immediately perform hand hygiene.

When caring for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 healthcare workers should follow droplet/contact precautions (surgical/procedure mask, isolation gown, gloves and eye protection).

For HCPs who are having difficulty procuring PPE, please review:

[Ontario Health: Quick Reference - PPE & Critical Supplies Escalation Process](#) at:  
[http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-healthfax/quick\\_reference\\_centralregion\\_ppe\\_process26\\_03\\_20\\_v1.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-healthfax/quick_reference_centralregion_ppe_process26_03_20_v1.pdf?sfvrsn=0).

## **5.0 Specimen Collection Details**

Instructions for Specimen Collection can be found on our website:

[http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-health-care-professionals/200213-sample-instruction-sheet-final-\(1\).pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-health-care-professionals/200213-sample-instruction-sheet-final-(1).pdf?sfvrsn=2). Please ensure that sample labelling is done correctly and matches the information on the submitted [COVID-19 requisition form](#):  
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/lab/2019-ncov-test-requisition.pdf?la=en>.

As outlined by [Public Health Ontario](#): <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-information-index/wuhan-novel-coronavirus> the following specimen collection kits can be used for nasal or nasopharyngeal specimens:

- Virus Respiratory Kit order: #390082
- Virus Culture Kit order: #390081
- *Chlamydia trachomatis* Culture - Female Kit order #: 390083
- *Chlamydia trachomatis* Culture - Male Kit order #: 390084
- *Mycoplasma pneumoniae/Chlamydia pneumoniae* PCR Kit order #: 390085
- Roche PCR Media Uniswab Kit order #: 300295
- *Bordetella pertussis* BP Kit order #: 390052

For more information on the requirements, please visit Public Health Ontario's Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Testing webpage at:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-information-index/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>.

## **6.0 Resources and Documents**

There are a number of resources and documents available through our Health Professional Portal at [www.smdhu.org/hpportal](http://www.smdhu.org/hpportal): <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/JFY/HPPortal> as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#): <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/> and the [Government of Ontario](#): [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019\\_guidance.aspx](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx).

There are various assessment centres that are now open. For up-to-date information on assessment centres please visit: <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Promos/Novel-Coronavirus/Assessment-Centres>.

The Government of Ontario has a dedicated website for Coronavirus which has general information as well as status of cases in Ontario which are updated daily. This can be found at the following website:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>. Additionally, the Ministry of Health has a dedicated website for Coronavirus with all relevant guidance and information. This can be found at the following website: [www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus).

Table 1

**Health Care Worker (HCW) Recommendations for  
 Testing/Quarantine/Self-isolation/Recovery:  
 Note that quarantine = self-isolation while asymptomatic**

Version: March 29, 2020

<b>HCW with No International Travel or No Exposures</b>	Asymptomatic	No quarantine required.
	Symptomatic with no lab test	Should be tested as soon as possible. If no testing is done: 1. Self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b> 2. Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution. May then return to work with appropriate PPE until 14 days from symptom onset; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.
	Symptomatic with positive lab test for COVID-19	1. Self-isolation until 2 negative swabs, (clearance swabs), obtained 24 hours apart <b>OR</b> 2. If no longer doing clearance swabs, self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b> 3. If deemed critical for operations, may return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution; AND continue to use PPE until 2 negative swabs obtained 24 hours apart (if no longer doing clearance swabs, continue until 14 days from symptom onset); AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.
	Symptomatic with negative lab test for COVID-19	Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution.
<b>HCW with International Travel</b>	Asymptomatic – non critical employee	14 days of quarantine since arrival in Canada.
	Asymptomatic – critical employee <sup>^</sup>	14 days of quarantine preferred but can work if: - Regular screening - Use of PPE for 14 days - Active self-monitoring - Immediately self-isolate if symptoms develop; AND report to Occupational Health
	Symptomatic with no lab testing	Should be tested as soon as possible. If no testing is done: 1. Self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b> 2. Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution. May then return to work with appropriate PPE until 14 days from symptom onset; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.
	Symptomatic with positive lab test for COVID-19	1. Self-isolation until 2 negative swabs, obtained 24 hours apart <b>OR</b> 2. If no longer doing clearance swabs, self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b> 3. If deemed critical for operations may return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution; AND continue to use PPE until 2 negative swabs obtained 24 hours apart (if no longer doing clearance swabs, continue until 14 days from symptom onset); AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.

Table 1

Version: March 29, 2020 (continued)

<b>HCW with International Travel</b> ( <i>cont</i> )	Symptomatic with negative lab test for COVID-19	Continue self-isolation until 14 days since arrival in Canada. If deemed critical <sup>^</sup> , return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution with PPE until 14 days since arrival in Canada; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days since arrival in Canada.
<b>HCW with High-risk Exposure* to Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 Case</b>	Asymptomatic	14 days of quarantine since last exposure to case. If deemed critical <sup>^</sup> , can return to work with appropriate PPE and self-monitoring; AND outside of work, continue quarantine until 14 day quarantine is complete.
	Symptomatic with no lab test	Should be tested as soon as possible. If no testing is done: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b></li> <li>2. Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution. May then return to work with appropriate PPE until 14 days from symptom onset; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.</li> </ol>
	Symptomatic with positive lab test for COVID-19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-isolation until 2 negative swabs, obtained 24 hours apart <b>OR</b></li> <li>2. If no longer doing clearance swabs, self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b></li> <li>3. If deemed critical for operations may return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution; AND continue to use PPE until 2 negative swabs obtained 24 hours apart (if no longer doing clearance swabs, continue until 14 days from symptom onset); AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.</li> </ol>
	Symptomatic with negative lab test	Complete 14 days of self-isolation since last exposure. If deemed critical <sup>^</sup> , return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution with PPE until 14 days of self-isolation since last exposure is complete; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days since last exposure.

**For a HCW who tested positive while asymptomatic, and was tested outside of the above recommendations, they can return to work immediately; AND continue with appropriate PPE at work until 2 negative swabs (if no longer doing clearance swabs, continue until 14 days after positive test result); AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from day of testing.**

<sup>^</sup> critical employee: deemed critical, by all parties including local public health

<sup>^^</sup> asymptomatic = resolution of symptoms that are reasonably likely to be attributed to active COVID-19 infection (e.g. a post-viral cough may persist)

\* high-risk exposure = provided direct care to confirmed case without consistent use of appropriate PPE or household contact of a confirmed case

References:

1. Public health management of cases and contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario (version 6.0)
2. Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health Memo RE: Managing Health Worker Illness and Return to Work COVID-19