

2019 Novel Coronavirus (nCoV): Update #2

Primary Care Guidance & Revised Case Definition

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

Date: January 30, 2020 (Revised at 11:30am)

Federal and provincial health authorities are closely monitoring an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (termed “2019-nCoV”) that was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and which continues to expand. 2019-nCoV is considered a novel human coronavirus that is genetically distinct from the common human coronaviruses (229E, NL63, OC43, HKU1), which cause seasonal acute respiratory illness.

There are currently two confirmed cases of 2019-nCoV in Ontario and one in British Columbia. Limited information is available to characterize the spectrum of clinical illness associated with 2019-nCoV. From what we know so far, the virus can cause mild, flu-like symptoms as well as severe disease. People with existing chronic conditions seem to be more vulnerable to severe illness. Pre-existing conditions reported to date include hypertension and other cardiovascular disorders, diabetes, liver disorders, and other respiratory diseases. Current information indicates that the incubation period is 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. The duration of infectivity for 2019-nCoV infection is currently unknown. No vaccine or specific treatment for 2019-nCoV infection is available; care is supportive. This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) will provide updated information as it becomes available.

Laboratory testing at this time will only be considered for those who meet the PUI definition as outlined in the Guidance document referenced below. SMDHU clinics and staff are not able to swab or perform the test on PUIs. Note that the PUI definition and guidance documents may change as the outbreak progresses. Healthcare providers should obtain a detailed travel history for patients being evaluated with fever and acute respiratory illness.

For your convenience we have attached the first five of eight pages of the [Ministry of Health's Guidance Document Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\) Guidance for Primary Care Providers in a Community Setting](#) (January 28, 2020). The document outlines screening, testing and infection and prevention control recommendations. The Ministry now has a dedicated Coronavirus website that will house all relevant guidance and information documents including this one. You may access this website at www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus. The document is also available at the Ontario Medical Association member portal.

If you have any questions or to report persons under investigation for 2019-nCoV, please contact the Infectious Diseases Team at 705-721-7520 ext. 8809.



Ministry of Health

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Guidance for Primary Care Providers in a Community Setting

Version 1 – January 28, 2020

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

There are a range of capabilities among primary care settings in Ontario and this document reflects a number of options that primary care providers may take depending on their capacity to safely use N95 respirators (fit test, training, supplies available) for patient examination and collection of specimens, as is recommended at this time.

What you need to know

1. All primary care settings should follow [Routine Practices](#) (routine precautions) plus droplet and contact precautions.
2. All primary care settings should undertake active screening (asking questions) and passive screening (signage) of patients for 2019-nCoV and develop plans for referral where they are unable to conduct testing within their clinics.
3. Primary care providers should assess their capacity to safely conduct a clinical examination and collect specimens for a patient at risk of having 2019-nCoV.
 - Only primary care providers who can safely use and have access to N95 respirators should conduct detailed clinical examinations on a patient with a clinical and travel/exposure history consistent with the Person Under Investigation (PUI) definition. Providers must also have appropriate cleaning procedures.
4. Testing must happen in an appropriate setting - one that supports the safe use of N95 respirators during [specimen collection](#).

- Some primary care providers will have the capacity to test for 2019-nCoV.
5. Primary care providers must report to their local public health unit all patients suspected of having 2019-nCoV.

Screening and Triage

Primary care providers play an important role in supporting the response to suspected cases of 2019-nCoV. Primary care settings are being requested to conduct passive and active screening.

1. *Passive screening*

- Signage should be posted on entry to the office and at reception areas for patients with symptoms to self-identify, perform hand hygiene, wear a procedure mask, and have access to tissue and a waste receptacle.
- All patients should be instructed to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing.

2. *Active screening at reception areas*

Sample Screening

Is the patient presenting with:

1. Fever, new onset of cough or difficulty breathing,

AND any of the following:

2. Travel to/from Hubei Province, China in the 14 days before the onset of illness

OR

Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of 2019-nCoV

OR

Close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to/from Hubei Province, China in the 14 days before their symptom

- Patients should be screened over the phone **before** scheduling appointments.
- Where patients present without phone screening, trained staff should screen patients upon entry using the above screening tool.
- Staff conducting screening should ideally be behind a barrier to protect from droplet/contact spread. A plexiglass barrier can protect reception staff from sneezing/ coughing patients.

3. What to do if a patient screens positive by phone?

- Where staff in the primary care office **have the ability** to safely use and has access to N95 respirators (e.g., fit tested, training, procedures, supplies), they may offer clinical assessment, examination, and testing (as indicated) in the their clinics. Patients should be given a procedure mask and placed in a room with the door closed on arrival to avoid contact with other patients in common area of the practice (e.g., waiting rooms). Clinicians should also:
 - Take a detailed history and conduct a clinical assessment to determine if the patient meets the case definition of a PUI.
 - The primary care provider should contact their local public health unit to report the suspect case and discuss the most appropriate setting for testing. Options may include; testing facilitated by the local public health unit; testing in the primary care office (using an N95 respirator) and ensuring coordination of sample delivery to the [Public Health Ontario laboratory](#); or referral to the nearest emergency department. All referrals to hospital should be made to a triage nurse.
 - Decisions about place of testing are dependent upon the patient's symptoms, their exposure history, and local resources for conducting testing.
 - If patients are referred to hospital, the primary care provider should coordinate with the hospital, local public health unit and the patient to make safe arrangements for travel to the hospital that maintains isolation of the patient. Where the patient is able, they can drive themselves to hospital.

- Where the primary care provider is unable to safely use an N95 respirator (i.e., are not fit tested, do not have access to a supply of N95 respirator, appropriate procedures are not in place to support safe use):
 - The primary care provider should take a clinical history and travel/exposure assessment by phone to determine if the patient is a PUI. The primary care provider should then contact the local public health unit to report the individual as a PUI, determine whether testing is appropriate, and if so, a management plan for the safe clinical examination and testing of the patient.

4. *What to do if a patient screens positive at the office?*

- Where staff in the primary care office have the ability to safely use N95s respirators (e.g., fit tested, training, procedures, supplies). They may offer clinical assessment, examination, and possibly testing, in the primary care setting:
 - Patients should be instructed to wear a procedure mask (if tolerated) and be placed in a single room on arrival to wait for further assessment.
 - Primary care providers should take a detailed history and clinical examination to determine if the patient meets the case definition of a person under investigation (PUI).
 - Primary care providers should contact their local public health unit to report the patient and discuss the most appropriate setting for testing. Options may include; testing facilitated by the local public health unit; testing in the primary care office (using an N95 respirator) and ensuring coordination of sample delivery to the [Public Health Ontario laboratory](#); or referral to the nearest emergency department. All referrals to hospital should be made to a triage nurse.
 - If patients are referred to hospital, the primary care provider should coordinate with the hospital, local public health unit and the patient to make safe arrangements for travel to the hospital that maintains isolation of the patient.
- Where the primary care provider is unable to safely use an N95 respirator (i.e., are not fit tested, do not have access to a supply of N95, appropriate procedures are not in place to support safe use) they should use a procedure

mask and isolate the patient as above including providing a procedure mask for the patient to wear. The provider can conduct a clinical history and visual assessment while under contact/droplet precautions and maintaining a 2 metre distance from the patient.

- The primary care provider should contact the local public health unit to report the PUI, and to discuss the most appropriate way for the patient to be clinically assessed and be tested, if warranted.
- If patients are referred to hospital, the primary care provider should work with the hospital, local public health unit and the patient to make safe arrangements for travel to the hospital while maintaining isolation of the patient.

Testing

- At this time, primary care providers are not expected to conduct testing for 2019-NCoV. However, all primary care providers have a duty to report a patient who has or may have NCoV to the local public health unit.
- Primary care practices who can safely use N95 respirators (if available) and have the capacity to collect and send the appropriate specimens for 2019-nCoV to [PHO](#), may test patients who they determine are a PUI.
- For more information about testing see the [test information sheet](#).

5. What to do if a patient has travel history to Hubei, China within the last 14 days but is asymptomatic?

- Any asymptomatic patient with a relevant travel/exposure should be advised to monitor for symptoms. If they develop a fever, onset of a new cough or difficulty breathing within 14 days of their travel date, they should call their primary care provider, Telehealth Ontario or your local public health unit.

Occupational Health & Safety and Infection Prevention & Control Advice for Primary Care Settings