

## COVID-19 (formerly known as 2019 nCoV): Update #7 Updated Traveller and Lab Testing Information Only One Swab is Recommended for Outpatients

**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:** March 4, 2020

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As outlined by the [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\) \(https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html\)](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html), there have been 33 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (20 in Ontario, 12 in British Columbia and 1 in Quebec) to date. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) to date has not had any confirmed cases. All tests to date have been negative.

**There is increasing evidence of community transmission in countries outside of China. The health unit is preparing for this possibility occurring locally in the upcoming weeks/months. Given the increasing likelihood of a COVID-19 pandemic, we are now advising that people prepare for that possibility by ensuring they have at least a two-week supply of food staples, medications and essential household supplies, and have a family care plan in the event family members fall ill or have to undergo home isolation due to public health measures, such as quarantine. A press release will be released later this week with respect to pandemic planning which can be found on our website along with other resources.**

### 1. Person Under Investigation (PUI) Case Definition as of February 26, 2020:

A person with fever and/or cough or difficulty breathing **AND** any of the following:

- Travel to **an impacted area** in the 14 days before onset of illness  
OR
- Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19  
OR
- Close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to **the impacted areas** within 14 days prior to their illness onset



## COVID-19 Impacted Areas as of February 27, 2020

- Mainland China (excluding Macau, Taiwan)
- Hong Kong
- Iran
- Italy
- Japan
- Singapore
- South Korea

If you have a patient who meets the PUI definition, please contact the Infectious Diseases Team at 705-721-7520 ext. 8809 during regular business hours (Monday to Friday 8:30 to 4:30) or after hours at 1-888-225-7851.

## Testing Outside the Case Definition

**The Public Health Ontario Laboratory is no longer requiring clinicians to call ahead to test for COVID-19 if a patient is symptomatic. It is not recommended at this time to test asymptomatic patients.** If a clinician wants to test an asymptomatic patient, they should contact the Public Health Ontario Laboratory directly to discuss this further at 416-235-6556 / 1-877-604-4567 or the After-Hours Emergency Duty Officer at 416-605-3113.

**If testing occurs, regardless if it is within the PUI case definition or not, the client will be considered a PUI and should self-isolate at home until the results are available. It should also be reported to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit by contacting the Infectious Diseases Team at 705-721-7520 ext. 8809 during regular business hours (Monday to Friday 8:30 to 4:30) or after hours at 1-888-225-7851.**

## 2. Specimen Collection

Public Health Ontario (PHO) has released a [COVID-19 Test Requisition Form](#). **Please use the COVID-19 Test Requisition Form for all COVID-19 samples.** You do not need a general requisition form in addition to this form. As outlined by PHO, please include the mandatory elements below on the requisition:

- Whether the individual meets criteria for a person under investigation (yes/ no)
- Travel history (country and dates)
- Contact of case or probable case (yes/no); if no, other sick contacts (yes/no; if yes, describe)
- Symptom onset date
- Patient symptoms (fever, cough, runny nose, pneumonia)
- Patient setting (ICU, hospitalized, ER or outpatient)
- Return address

Specimens no longer are sent to the National Microbiology Lab (NML) for confirmation. The current test for COVID-19 (RT-PCR) at the Public Health Ontario Lab takes less than 24 hours to complete.

### **Current Recommendations for Specimen Collection:**

#### **Patients not admitted to hospital (including those in ER)**

**A single upper respiratory tract specimen will be accepted for COVID-19 testing.** Upper respiratory tract specimens include a nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) **OR** viral throat swab collected in universal transport medium. NPS is preferred over a viral throat swab – information available to date suggests that a NPS has higher sensitivity than a throat swab for COVID-19 detection.

#### **In-patients**

For in-patients, it is recommended to collect a minimum of two specimens, from two different sites:

1. Upper respiratory tract: submit both a nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) **AND** viral throat swab.  
**Note, although the NP swab and throat swab use the same sampling kit, a separate kit (medium tube) is needed for each sample. Also, for the NP swab, the smaller swab is used, while for the throat swab, the larger swab is used.**
2. Lower respiratory tract specimens, collect if patient has a productive cough. Do not induce. Submit specimens when possible.

Instructions for Specimen Collection can be found [here](#). Please ensure that sample labelling is also done correctly and matches the information on the submitted requisition form.

Note that an N95 mask, and droplet and contact precautions are recommended for the clinician, but a negative-pressure room is not necessary if one is not available. COVID-19 at this time is not thought to be airborne, and therefore the room can be cleaned and used immediately after without the 2 hour waiting period that is recommended for airborne diseases such as measles. If a patient screens positive, they should be given a procedure mask and placed in a room with the door closed on arrival, where possible, to avoid contact with other patients in common area of the practice (e.g., waiting rooms). **It is not recommended that the patient wear an N95 mask while waiting for testing.**

For more information on the requirements, please visit PHO's Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Testing webpage at: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-information-index/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>.

### 3. Travellers

Asymptomatic travelers from Iran and Hubei province in China should self-isolate for 14 days from the day they left Iran or Hubei province to come to Canada and contact the Infectious Diseases Team at 705-721-7520 ext. 8809 during regular business hours (Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) or after hours at 1-888-225-7851.

Travellers from **COVID-19 Impacted Areas** should self-monitor for signs and symptoms for 14 days after leaving the impacted areas and contact the Infectious Diseases Team at the number listed above if symptoms develop.

Up to date travel health notices are listed at the following website: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice>.

### 4. Personal Protective Equipment – Provincial Supplies

The Ministry of Health continues to be aware of ongoing challenges with regards to PPE supplies. If you have any questions, concerns or feedback regarding PPE, you can email the Ministry [EOClogistics.moh@ontario.ca](mailto:EOClogistics.moh@ontario.ca).

### 5. 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).

The Government of Ontario has a dedicated website for Coronavirus which has general information as well as provincial PUI statistics which are updated daily. This can be found at the following website address: <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 address: [www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus).