

COVID-19: Update #12
Testing Recommendations for Long-Term Care & Retirement Homes
Universal Masking for HCW/General Masking for Public
Quarantine & Self-Isolation Recommendations for Non-Health Care Workers
SMDHU No Longer Receiving Negative Lab Results

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, Hospices

Date: April 7, 2020 (Updated April 8, 2020)

The most current case counts for laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Simcoe Muskoka District Health (SMDHU) region are available at:

<http://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/topics/infectious-diseases/a-h/covid-19>.

1.0 Testing Recommendations for Long-Term Care & Retirement Homes

The Ministry of Health is actively supporting long-term care and retirement homes by identifying all appropriate actions to contain outbreaks, including increased screening for staff and residents.

Any staff or resident of a long-term care (LTCH) or retirement home (RHome) should be swabbed immediately if any new symptoms develop; even if only one symptom is present. This includes mild respiratory symptoms as well as enteric symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea. In the context of the pandemic, a single laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 in a LTCH or RHome (resident or staff) would trigger an outbreak.

Testing during an outbreak:

- **Every symptomatic** resident** (whether linked to the outbreak or not) in the institution (not just affected area) must be swabbed, including deceased residents who were not previously tested.
 - On the PHO requisition, clearly mark “Institution” in the Patient Setting / Population section.
- **Every symptomatic** staff** in the institution (not just affected area) must be swabbed.
 - Staff includes anyone conducting activities in the facility.
 - On the PHO requisition, clearly mark “Healthcare Worker” in the Patient Setting / Population section.

*** One compatible symptom (respiratory or enteric) should lead to testing*

- Include the facility’s outbreak number (if known at time of specimen collection) on the requisition.

At this time, asymptomatic residents/staff are not recommended to be tested, unless it is in follow-up to a previous positive test to clear them from self-isolation.



2.0 Universal Masking for Health Care Workers

To decrease transmission of COVID-19 infections during this crucial time and potentially during the asymptomatic/pre-symptomatic stage of illness, SMDHU is recommending that all health care providers implement **the use of surgical masks for all asymptomatic patient/resident encounters**. This recommendation is supported by the Ontario Health document: [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) use during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (pages 6 & 7). For PPE supply issues, please refer to [Ontario Health: Quick Reference - PPE and Critical Supplies Escalation Process](#). For any direct care provided to patients/residents with **suspect or confirmed COVID-19**, droplet/contact precautions (surgical/procedure mask, isolation gown, gloves and eye protection) are recommended.

General Public Wearing Masks

Wearing a non-medical mask (for example a [homemade cloth mask](#)) in the community has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. Strict hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and physical (social) distancing, will reduce individuals' chances of being exposed to the virus.

However, Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is advising that wearing a non-medical mask is an additional measure individuals can take to **protect others** around them, especially when they are unable to physically distance themselves.

Wearing a non-medical mask is another way to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. Just like the recommendation not to cough into hands (instead, cover cough with tissues or sleeve), a mask can reduce the chance that others are coming into contact with respiratory droplets.

It is important to understand that **non-medical masks have limitations and need to be used safely**. More information is available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-devices/activities/announcements/covid19-notice-home-made-masks.html>.

3.0 Quarantine and Self-Isolation Recommendations for non-Health Care Workers

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. Health care worker recommendations for quarantine & isolation are available at: http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/hcw_covid-19_recommendationtable_20200329.pdf?sfvrsn=0.

For the purposes of discontinuing self-isolation in a lab-confirmed HCW, there is no preference between:

- a) self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset (as long as the HCW is afebrile and the symptoms have resolved) OR
- b) self-isolation until 2 negative swabs, (clearance swabs) obtained 24 hours apart.

A summary of quarantine & self-isolation recommendations for non-health care workers can be found in Table 1, Page 4 of this HealthFax.

The period of communicability 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.

4.0 SMDHU No Longer Calling to Provide Negative Results

The Public Health Ontario Lab (PHOL) together with other labs conducting COVID-19 testing across Ontario will no longer be reporting negative results to SMDHU. **As a result and effective immediately, SMDHU will no longer be calling clients with negative results.**

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has launched an online portal for clients to obtain their results: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>. This portal is linked to the Ontario Laboratory Information System (OLIS). There is a chance that clients will receive their positive result prior to receiving a call from their health care provider or public health. If clients are unable to receive their results through the portal, they will be directed back to the health care provider who ordered the test to obtain their results.

5.0 Resources and Documents

There are a number of resources and documents available through our Health Professional Portal at www.smdhu.org/hpportal as well as through [Public Health Ontario: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/](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>.

For further healthcare worker information regarding COVID-19 or to report a suspect or confirmed case of COVID-19, please contact the Infectious Diseases Team at (705) 721-7520 extension 8809 during business hours (Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m. and Saturday to Sunday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) or after hours at 1-888-225-7851.

Table 1

Quarantine & Self-isolation Recommendations for Non-Health Care Workers

Version: April 7, 2020

All individuals (except healthcare workers)	Asymptomatic with International Travel	Quarantine for 14 days since arrival in Canada.
	Asymptomatic with High-risk Exposure** to Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 Case	Quarantine for 14 days since last exposure to case. If case resides in household, quarantine would start from the last day that isolation procedures were put in place.
	Symptomatic with no lab test	Self-isolation for 14 days* from onset of symptoms.
	Symptomatic with negative lab test	Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution.
	Symptomatic with positive lab test for COVID-19	Self-isolation for 14 days* from onset of symptoms, (unless hospitalized then defer to facility policy).

* Must not have a fever and symptoms are improving. Otherwise, recommendation to keep self-isolating and follow-up with primary care provider or Telehealth.

** High-risk exposures for non-healthcare workers include:

- Residing in the same living space as a case while case was infectious;
- Having direct contact with body fluids of a case while case was infectious; and
- Laboratory workers processing COVID-19 specimens without appropriate PPE.