

COVID-19: Update #13

Testing Guidance Update (Including Asymptomatic Testing)

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 13, 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>.

[Ministry of Health COVID-19 Testing Guidance Update](#)

Who Should be Tested:

At this time, the province is testing all specimens that are submitted. The supply of test swabs continues to increase provincially, and some assessment centres may be able to test non-priority patients. Where there are shortages of testing supplies, the following groups should be prioritized for testing within 24 hours to inform public health and clinical management for these individuals:

- Symptomatic health care workers (any care delivery setting) and staff who work in health care facilities
- Symptomatic residents and staff in long-term care facilities and retirement homes and other institutional settings e.g. mental health institutions and homeless shelters (as per outbreak guidance)
- 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 into Canada
- Symptomatic first responders (i.e. firefighters, police)
- Individuals referred for testing by local public health

Testing Guidance for Hospital Inpatients/Long-term Care Residents who experience the following:

- Fever (Temperature of 37.8°C or greater);
OR
- Any new/worsening acute respiratory illness symptom (e.g. cough, shortness of breath (dyspnea), sore throat, runny nose or sneezing, nasal congestion, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing);
OR
- Clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia.



Atypical presentations of COVID-19 should be considered, particularly in elderly persons. For a list of potential atypical symptoms, please see table below (referenced from [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Testing Guidance Update](#), Page 5).

Symptoms	Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained fatigue/malaise • Delirium (acutely altered mental status and inattention) • Falls • Acute functional decline • Exacerbation of chronic conditions • Digestive symptoms, including nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain • Chills • Headaches • Croup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained tachycardia, including age specific tachycardia for children • Decrease in blood pressure • Unexplained hypoxia (even if mild i.e. O2 sat <90%) • Lethargy, difficulty feeding in infants (if no other diagnosis)

Testing of Asymptomatic Persons in Selected Situations

Asymptomatic testing is only recommended for the following situations:

1. Testing of **asymptomatic new admissions or re-admissions to a long-term care home or retirement home** should be performed **within the first 14 days** under the direction of the overseeing clinician.
 Patients transferred from a hospital to a long-term care home should be tested prior to the transfer. A negative result does not rule out the potential for incubating illness and all patients should remain under a 14-day self-isolation period following transfer.
2. In the event of a symptomatic resident in an **institutional setting** (e.g. long-term care home, retirement home, shelter, mental health institution, prison, hospice and other congregate living settings), **asymptomatic residents living in the same room should be tested immediately along with the symptomatic resident**. A negative result does not rule out the potential for incubating illness and all close contacts should remain under a 14-day self-isolation period following contact.
3. In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 in a long-term care home or retirement home **asymptomatic contacts of a confirmed case**, determined in consultation with the local public health unit, should be tested including:
 - All residents living in adjacent rooms
 - All staff working on the unit/care hub
 - All essential visitors that attended at the unit/care hub
 - Any other contacts deemed appropriate for testing based on a risk assessment by local public health

A negative result for residents/essential visitors does not rule out the potential for incubating illness and all residents tested should remain under a 14-day self-isolation period following contact.

As noted in the previous health fax, is it recommended that all health care workers implement **the use of surgical masks (and eye protection if available) 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. Contagiousness is greater earlier in the symptomatic course i.e. first seven days vs last seven days of symptoms.

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/> and the Government of Ontario: 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.