

COVID-19: Update #24

Surge in Cases, Updated School & Child Care Screening Tool, Updated Testing Guidance

Updated Guidance on the Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19

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, Retirement Homes, Hospices

Date: October 7, 2020

Local Epidemiology & Reporting

Last week, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) recorded the highest number of COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, at 75 cases. Case counts have been trending upwards since mid-August. There has also been an increase in the number of close contacts identified per case. It is crucial at this time that everyone try to limit their close social interactions to just their household and limit their activities outside their homes to those that are essential such as work, school, groceries, etc.

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 have accounted for the highest proportion of COVID-19 cases in Simcoe Muskoka since June. Half of all active cases are among those between 18 and 34 years of age. We have also seen the highest weekly testing rates for Simcoe County and Ontario since the start of the pandemic.

The most current case counts for laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in the SMDHU region are available at [Simcoe Muskoka Health Stats](#).

Updated School & Child Care Screening Tool

On October 1st, 2020 the Ministry of Health revised the guidance for the management for COVID-19 in schools. Highlights of the changes include revisions to the provincial school and child care screening tool and new return to school requirements. Due to the differences in symptoms now considered compatible with COVID-19 in different age groups, there are now two sets of provincial screening questions: one for students and one for staff/visitors.

SMDHU has developed new screening tools that build on the provincial screening tools and provide more specific direction on what students and staff/visitors should do when they have symptoms that require assessment. Specifically, we are asking that these individuals seek assessment and testing at a COVID-19 assessment centre, and/or seek medical advice from their health care provider if required.



Schools and school boards in Simcoe Muskoka are now advised to refer staff and families to the SMDHU's locally adapted screening tools in place of the provincial tool:

- [Student and child care screening toolⁱⁱ](#)
- [Employee/visitor screening toolⁱⁱⁱ](#)

Additionally, the SMDHU has revised its [COVID-19: SMDHU Supplemental Guidance Document for School Settings^{iv}](#) to reflect recent changes in provincial and local direction. We have also developed/revised the following menu of tools and resources to assist schools and families in understanding the current guidelines:

- [My child did not pass the COVID-19 daily screening. Now what?^v](#) (includes return to school guidelines for students) - *Revised October 5, 2020*
- [Return to School Protocol for Staff/Visitors with COVID-19 Symptoms^{vi}](#) - *Revised October 5, 2020*
- The health unit has developed an [Attestation Form^{vii}](#) as an optional form that health care providers can suggest families use to document safe return to school instead of a doctor's note or negative lab result, if requested.

The following is the direction provided to parents if their child(ren) have COVID-19 symptoms in keeping with the SMDHU [Student and child care screening tool](#):

*If you notice that your child has **new or worsening** symptoms, what you do depends on the symptoms and how usual they are for your child. If your child has new or worsening:*

- Fever/chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Decreased or loss of smell or taste

Your child should isolate immediately and you should visit an assessment centre for testing and/or seek medical advice, if required.

*If your child has **ONE** new or worsening symptom (that is not related to a known cause or condition) that includes:*

- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose/runny nose
- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- Fatigue/lethargy/muscle aches/malaise

Your child should stay home for 24 hours to be monitored to see whether the symptom gets better or worse. If they start to feel better and the symptom is improving, they can return to school/child care when well enough to do so (and in accordance to school/child care policy) and no COVID-19 testing is needed. **If the symptom gets worse or additional symptoms develop, you should visit an assessment centre for testing and/or seek medical advice, if required.**

*If your child has **TWO or MORE** new or worsening symptoms (that are not related to a known cause or condition) that include:*

- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose/runny nose
- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- Fatigue/lethargy/muscle aches/malaise

Your child should isolate immediately and you should visit an assessment centre for testing and/or seek medical advice, if required.

The above resources have also been posted to the SMDHU website at <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/COVID-19/Return-to-School> for Administrators/Educators and for Families.

Updated COVID-19 Testing Guidance

On September 24th, the provincial [COVID-19 Testing Guidance](#)^{viii} was updated to prioritize those who are at greatest risk, while shifting away from untargeted asymptomatic testing. Only the following people should be referred to assessment centers:

- Anyone who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- Anyone who has been exposed to a confirmed case, and has been notified through public health or the COVID Alert app. **Note: Given the current high volume of cases and close contacts, public health may ask the confirmed case to notify their close contacts to quarantine and to get tested.**
- Any worker or resident in a setting that is currently experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak as identified by public health.
- Anyone who requires testing as part of a targeted testing initiative directed by the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

Low risk, asymptomatic people should not be considered for COVID-19 testing at this time.

The only asymptomatic people that should be tested are those who are included in the following targeted testing initiatives:

- Residents and workers in long-term care homes and retirement homes
- Visitors to a long-term care home
- Residents or workers in homeless shelters
- International students who have passed their 14 day quarantine period
- Farm workers
- Indigenous communities
- Other setting-specific populations, as outlined in CMOH guidance (e.g. cancer patients)
- Travelers
- Pre-surgery patients who have been directed to be tested

Eligible asymptomatic targeted testing groups may change from time to time.

Effective September 25th, testing for those who belong to these targeted asymptomatic testing groups is being offered in up to 60 pharmacies across the province. However, there is currently only one pharmacy in our jurisdiction so pharmacy testing capacity in Simcoe Muskoka is very limited at this time. We hope that additional pharmacies will come on board in the coming weeks. In the meantime, these people can seek testing at their local assessment center. People can use the [COVID-19 testing location finder](#)^{ix} to locate a testing location near them.

Updated: COVID-19 Quick Reference Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance

The [COVID-19 Quick Reference Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance](#)^x document from the Ministry of Health was updated on October 1, 2020 (version 10). **The most significant change includes moving from a 14-day clearance period (period of communicability) for all cases to a 10-day clearance period for the majority of cases with mild to moderate illness** and a 20-day clearance period for cases with severe illness (requiring ICU-level support) or are immunocompromised.

However, the incubation period remains at 14-days, and therefore contacts who have had a high-risk exposure to a case must still self-isolate for 14-days from their last exposure.

Updated: Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario

The [Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#)^{xi} document was updated on September 8, 2020 (version 9.0). The following are the areas of the document that were updated:

- Guidance on case isolation period including asymptomatic cases with low pre-test probability
- How to manage positive COVID-19 serology results
- Management of cases with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C)
- Update to the management of cases after clearance with new symptoms, exposures and/or positive test results
- Update to recommendations for travelers
- Recommendations for people who are notified of exposure through the COVID Alert app

Given the large number of cases, and sometimes long turn-around-times for lab results, SMDHU may be unable to reach all high-risk contacts in a timely manner. As such, in the interim, some cases may be asked to reach out directly to their high-risk contacts to provide our advice to quarantine for the 14-day incubation period and to get tested.

[A class order under Section 22](#)^{xii} of the Health Protection and Promotion Act has been issued by Simcoe Muskoka's Medical Officer of Health (MOH) to enforce COVID-19 self-isolation requirements in Simcoe Muskoka. The order takes effect October 6, 2020 and remains in effect until the MOH declares it is no longer needed.

The order applies to any person living or present in the County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka who:

- is identified as a person diagnosed with COVID-19
- has the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, has been tested for COVID-19 and is awaiting the results of their test
- otherwise has reasonable grounds to believe they have one or more symptoms of COVID-19
- is a close contact of a person identified as a person diagnosed with COVID-19

This is to ensure that those persons follow the required self-isolation or quarantine requirements related to COVID-19. A [press release](#)^{xiii} explaining the order has been issued.

COVID Alert App

SMDHU is promoting the use of the COVID Alert app locally, as it is one more tool to assist us in our fight against COVID-19. It is important to note that the app does not take the place of contact tracing that public health does, which includes additional elements of assessment not reflected by the app (For example, the app doesn't know if you were wearing a face covering or personal protective equipment).

If someone receives notification through the COVID Alert app that they have been exposed, they should be directed to seek testing and self-isolate until they receive their test results. If they receive a negative result, they then can come out of self-isolation and continue to self-monitor for symptoms. However, if this same person is contacted by public health and informed that they are a high-risk contact of a confirmed case, then they will need to follow the direction of public health at that time.

There are a number of other resources and documents available through our Health Professionals Portal at www.smdhu.org/hpportal as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#)^{xiv} and the [Government of Ontario](#).^{xv}

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

ⁱⁱ <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/Return-to-school/covid-19-student-screening-tool.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

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- iii <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/Return-to-school/covid-19-screening-tool-for-school-or-child-care.pdf?sfvrsn=4>
- iv https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/Return-to-school/covid-19supplementalguidance_schools-final_aoda-web.pdf?sfvrsn=12
- v <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/Return-to-school/my-child-did-not-pass-the-covid-19-daily-screening---now-what.pdf?sfvrsn=4>
- vi <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/Return-to-school/covid-19-return-to-school-or-child-care-protocol-for-employees-or-visitors.pdf?sfvrsn=2>
- vii <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/Return-to-school/return-to-school-attestation-form.pdf?sfvrsn=2>
- viii http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_testing_guidance.pdf
- ix <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations/>
- x http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_testing_clearing_cases_guidance.pdf
- xi http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/contact_mngmt/management_cases_contacts.pdf
- xii <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/class-order-s-22-smdhu-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>
- xiii <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/HealthUnit/About/Newsroom/2020/10/06/Health-unit-issues-class-order-under-Section-22-to-further-protect-the-public-against-COVID-19>
- xiv <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>
- xv http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx.