

COVID-19: Update #26

UK Variant: Mitigation Strategies for Community-Spread

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: January 25, 2021

As of January 24, 2021, **seven samples of COVID-19 have been identified to be the UK B.1.1.7 variant in SMDHU**. This variant of concern (VOC) is more easily transmitted, resulting in much larger numbers of cases in a very rapid fashion.

This variant has been confirmed to be the causative agent in one Barrie long-term care home outbreak and, is being investigated in a Bradford long-term care home outbreak. Given the increased communicability of this variant, the SMDHU has developed a [COVID-19 Variant of Concern \(VOC\) Strategy](#)ⁱ. Please note that we expect that this document will have numerous changes as more is known about the epidemiology of VOCs locally and in Ontario. Please reference the link above for the most up to date version.

Key Mitigation Strategies

Comprehensive & timely case and contact management

- Prioritization of case and contact management for individuals with suspected links to individuals testing positive for a VOC will occur
- Extension of isolation periods to a minimum of 14 days
- Lower threshold for assessment of high-risk exposures including:
 - Where either case or contact were not masked for any duration of time and were less than 2 metres from each other will be deemed high-risk
 - Testing recommended for high-risk contacts:
 - First swab: as soon as feasible; and
 - Second swab: on day 12-13 of quarantine
 - Note: quarantine ends when the day 12-13 test result is reported as negative.
- Lower threshold for assessment of household contacts of confirmed/probable VOC cases:
 - All household contacts (regardless of level of exposure) of VOC cases to be in quarantine for 14 days from last exposure to VOC case;
 - Testing recommended for household contacts:
 - First swab: as soon as feasible; and
 - Second swab: on day 12-13 of quarantine
 - Note: quarantine ends when the day 12-13 test result is reported as negative.



Infection Prevention and Control/Outbreak Measures

- **For facilities in outbreaks, where VOC is suspected, all staff must go into work self-isolation* and only work at that outbreak facility and cannot work at any other retirement home or any other institutional/congregate setting**
- Any non-staff who enters an outbreak facility, where VOC is suspected, more than once every 7 days must go into work self-isolation* (at their primary work site) and not work at any other LTCH, retirement or group home setting for the duration of the outbreak.
- Any individual (e.g., external partner supports, government inspectors, Emergency Medical Services (EMS)) entering facility infrequently (less than once every 7 days) requested to be swabbed on day 7 & 14 after onsite attendance
- Asymptomatic, non-high risk contacts who are staff in an outbreak facility, where VOC is suspected, should be offered re-housing where possible to prevent transmission at their primary residence
- **Essential visitors no longer allowed onsite to an outbreak facility, when VOC is suspected, unless for palliative reasons and then only one visitor at a time**
- Residents/patients to wear medical masks (if able) for any care/activity where another individual is <2 metres from resident/patient
- **When a facility is in outbreak, where VOC is suspected, testing of all staff, essential visitors and residents/patients is to occur twice a week (every 3-4 days) until the end of the outbreak**

Immunization

- Ideally, all staff, essential visitors, and external partner agencies providing onsite assistance to a facility in outbreak where a variant is of concern to receive 1st dose no less than 14 days before entering an outbreak facility where VOC is suspected
 - The [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#) ⁱⁱ (NACI) identifies that there is no evidence for use of vaccine as post-exposure prophylaxis and benefits after the first dose not seen until at least 14 days after first dose
- Residents, staff, essential visitors and external partner agencies providing onsite assistance should be immunized as soon as possible

* **Work self-isolation means working only at the primary work site and then [self-isolating](#) ⁱⁱⁱ at home, and not to go anywhere else.**

ⁱ https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/ify-health-care-professionals/smdhu-regional-containment-strategy_forexternal-distribution.pdf?sfvrsn=6

ⁱⁱ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/guidance-key-populations-early-covid-19-immunization.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en>