

COVID-19: Update #29

UK Variant: Revised 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: February 17, 2021

As of February 16, 2021, **153 confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been identified to be the UK B.1.1.7 variant** in the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) area. An additional 131 individuals who have had a positive first screening test for a variant of concern (VOC) have also been identified; most being linked to the Roberta Place outbreak with secondary and tertiary spread noted. The second confirmatory test involves whole genomic sequencing. This VOC is more easily transmitted, resulting in much larger numbers of cases in a very rapid fashion. The [most recent provincial modelling](#)ⁱ released on February 11, 2021 projects that the highly transmissible B.1.1.7 may soon dominate. In order to control growth with variants, the Reproduction number (Re) must be 0.7 or less. If the Reproduction number is 0.9 or higher, this will trigger exponential growth. The Current Re is between 0.8 and 0.9. Provincial ICU occupancy has stabilized, however, growth could start as early as the second week in March depending on the spread of B.1.1.7.

Revised Class Section 22 to Long-Term Care Homes

On February 11, 2021, SMDHU revised its Class Section 22 Order to regional long-term care facilities to note the following:

- Effective Monday, February 15, 2021, active screening upon entry to the facility must begin including assessing whether any current members of the same household of a staff or essential visitor are symptomatic with COVID-19 compatible signs and symptoms;
 - If active screening identifies any current household member of a staff or essential visitor as symptomatic, the staff or essential visitor shall be excluded from the facility until the symptomatic household member(s) receives a PCR test negative for COVID-19 and the results have been provided to the facility; or
 - In the event the symptomatic household member(s) declines PCR testing, the staff or essential visitor may not enter the facility until 24 days (10 days of which shall be for the period of contagiousness for the symptomatic household member(s) and the remaining 14 days shall be for the potential incubation period in the staff or essential visitor) have passed from the onset of symptoms in the symptomatic household member(s) and the staff or essential visitor is not symptomatic or as otherwise stated by SMDHU.



VOC Strategy

The Ministry of Health has released the [COVID-19 Variant of Concern: Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance](#)ⁱⁱ document. The [COVID-19 Variant of Concern \(VOC\) Strategy](#)ⁱⁱⁱ has been updated with provincial direction. However, a more stringent approach to determination of high-risk exposures and outbreak management continues to be taken given local SMDHU variant epidemiology. Please note that we expect that this document will continue to have 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.

Notable Revisions in Strategy

Enhanced contact management

- Clarification of exposure risk levels (**applicable to all settings including healthcare**):
 - In household settings, most contacts will be deemed high-risk unless case was already in self-isolation from start of their infectious period;
 - In most situations, the appropriate and consistent use of a medical mask and eye protection by the contact is sufficient to be considered low risk of exposure;
 - If a medical mask & eye protection is not worn, the following approaches will be used:
 - When case & contact are both wearing masks (medical or non-medical), but contact is not wearing eye protection while being within 2 metres of case for a **cumulative duration** of at least 15 minutes in a 24 hour period, the contact will be deemed high-risk;
 - When the case is not wearing a mask, and the contact is not wearing both medical mask and eye protection, any duration of exposure except for a transient exposure while the contact is within 2 metres of the case will be deemed high-risk; and
 - When the contact is not wearing a mask, even if the case is wearing a mask (medical or non-medical), any duration of exposure except for a transient exposure while the contact is within 2 metres will be deemed high-risk.
 - A SMDHU Exposure Assessment Resource is available at:
<https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/ify-health-care-professionals/exposureassessmentexternal.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

Infection Prevention and Control/Outbreak Measures

- Essential visitors are now supported to attend facilities in COVID-19 outbreak, as long as a VOC outbreak has not been confirmed at the facility
 - A facility outbreak will be confirmed as VOC when one specimen from a resident or staff (who worked while infectious) is identified as having a mutation of interest.
- Infrequent visitors (entering a confirmed VOC outbreak facility less than once or once every 7 days) are now only requested to be swabbed once on or after day 7 of onsite attendance

Immunization

- Vaccine efficacy for the Pfizer vaccine is estimated to be about 90% starting 14 days after the 1st dose is administered.
- Immunization, either with 1 or 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, does not alter current case, contact or outbreak control measures.

ⁱ https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Update-on-COVID-19-Projections_February-11-2021_English-2.pdf

ⁱⁱ http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/VOC_guidance.pdf

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