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## COVID-19 – Update #32

### Revised Local Case & Contact Management Approach

### Due to large volumes of cases, not all cases and contacts will be reached by Public Health

**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, Congregate Settings

**Date:** April 8, 2021

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#### Local Epidemiology & Reporting

Last week, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) recorded a 44% increase in the number of COVID-19 cases reported (n=444) compared to the previous week (March 21-27, n=308), reflecting an incidence of 74.7 cases per 100,000 population for March 28 to April 3, 2021. Case counts have been trending upwards since the end of February with an average daily growth at 0.8% for the most recent week. Approximately 83% of cases are symptomatic at/around time of testing. It is crucial at this time that everyone try to limit their close social interactions to only their household and limit their activities outside their homes to those that are essential such as work, school, groceries, and medical appointments. The most current case counts for laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in the SMDHU region are available at [Simcoe Muskoka Health Stats](#).

#### Revised Case & Contact Management Approach

With the high case counts, often with many identified high-risk contacts (HRCs) and potential exposure locations requiring follow up, effective Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, SMDHU has had to modify Case & Contact Management processes to ensure that we can continue to reach new cases as quickly as possible. As such, the following measures have been put in place at this time:

- Priority remains reaching confirmed cases within 24-48 hours of lab receipt
  - Cases will receive an abridged case management interview
  - Cases will no longer be followed through to clearance from self-isolation by public health. They will be provided a date when they would be cleared at that interview.
  - Cases will be asked to notify their own close contacts based on the criteria of either
    - a) living in the same household or
    - b) having been within 2 metres of the case during the period of communicability for at least 15



minutes cumulatively without both the case and contact wearing a mask (medical or non-medical). The close contact will be asked by case to [self-isolate](#) for 14 days from their last exposure and go for a COVID-19 test.

- Exposure site investigations and outbreak investigations are being prioritized based on vulnerability.
- Patients/staff identified as high-risk contacts through health care setting exposures will be referred to Public Health Ontario's Contact Tracing Program; and
- Cohorts of high-risk contacts (students) who are excluded from school/child care will be notified of their need to self-isolate via communication from public health via letter.

**Due to the high volume of cases that continue to be reported, SMDHU may not have the capacity to follow up with all reported cases. Advise positive cases of COVID to [self-isolate](#) for 10 days from symptom onset or, if no symptoms at time of testing, from the date they were tested and to advise their high-risk contacts to go for testing and isolate for 14 days. Additional information regarding what individuals should do while awaiting test results and when test results are known can be found on the [Factsheet: Follow-up Instructions for Individuals Tests for COVID-19](#).**

### Launching Virtual Assist

Today, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is launching the use of Virtual Assistant (VA), a new tool which will enable Public Health Services to increase the speed and capacity for case management. The VA is an internet and text messaging tool that will support the COVID-19 response in our community.

Residents who test positive for COVID-19 may receive a text message from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit with a secure link to complete a personal assessment form. The text will allow the resident to click on a secure link to a form to provide information about health status, close contacts and other important information.

- The Virtual Assistant can be used on mobile devices and is iOS and Android compatible. The online form will function if the link is used in a browser on a desktop or laptop computer; however, it was created for a mobile experience.
- All information collected is kept confidential and protected by Ontario's strict privacy laws and will only be used for public health purposes.
- The Virtual Assistant tool is part of the Province's case and contact management system.

### Outbreak Management Approach

Noting with the rising case counts and increased number of exposure settings, SMDHU's capacity to follow up in a timely way with exposure locations will be limited. If you are noting a cluster of cases related to a common exposure site, please call the Infectious Diseases team to report at 705-721-7520 ext. 8809. SMDHU will continue to prioritize outbreaks and exposure site investigations in settings based on vulnerability and SMDHU capacity.