

COVID-19: Update #31

Revised: Regional VOC Strategy New: Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Medical Officer of Health Order re: Service Provision to Vulnerable Individuals

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: March 8, 2021

Local Epidemiology & Reporting

The most current case counts for laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases, including variants of concern (VOCs), in the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) region are available at [Simcoe Muskoka Health Stats](#)ⁱ. As of March 3, 2021, Simcoe Muskoka has more confirmed cases of the U.K. variant and positive screens for a VOC than any other health unit. **Currently, about 66% of our COVID-19 cases are either a confirmed case of the U.K. variant or a positive screen for a VOC (note that 99% of those positive screens if tested would be confirmed to be a VOC).** We expect this percentage to continue to rise. Fortunately, we have seen the total number of weekly COVID cases decrease in the last 2 weeks, suggesting that our control measures at this time are sufficient to overcome the VOC's increased transmissibility. A new section of the Health Stats website has been launched with VOC data.

Revised Regional VOC Strategy

Given the local epidemiology with an increasing proportion of COVID-19 cases being identified as variants of concern, certain regional approaches to limit VOC transmission to vulnerable settings are being revised with the assumption that all COVID-19 cases are VOCs.

Notable changes:

- Individuals with new positive COVID-19 laboratory results will be counseled that it is likely a VOC and that no further communication will occur when VOC screening results are known.
- Institutions, schools and workplaces will not be advised if a VOC is linked to their facilities.
- All essential visitors are supported to visit healthcare institutions in a VOC COVID-19 outbreak.
- Work self-isolation is no longer required for employees, frequent or infrequent essential visitors of healthcare institutions in a VOC COVID-19 outbreak.
- Infrequent essential visitors are no longer requested to complete post-visit COVID-19 testing.



The Ministry of Health has released an updated version of the [COVID-19 Variant of Concern Interim Guidance](#)ⁱⁱ document. Healthcare facilities must continue to follow provincial directives and legislation applicable to their specific setting including single-site employment for long-term care and retirement home staff.

New SMDHU Medical Officer of Health Order re: Service Provision to Vulnerable Individuals

On March 8, 2021, a [Class Section 22 Order](#)ⁱⁱⁱ to any individual operating or offering services to vulnerable individuals was issued. The order is applicable to third-party service providers entering long-term care, retirement, and group homes as well as those offering in-home services to vulnerable individuals. Healthcare settings are encouraged to review the order and share with appropriate contracted service providers.

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

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

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/orders-and-instructions-/class-order-to-service-providers-of-vulnerable-settings-s-22-smdhu-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>