

MEMORANDUM

TO: Physicians and Nurse Practitioners
FROM: Dr. Janice Fitzgerald
RE: COVID-19 Updates
DATE: March 21, 2020

Please be advised that all travelers returning to the province from other parts of Canada or outside the country are now required to self-isolate for 14 days as per the Chief Medical Officer of Health's Special Measures Order. If symptoms develop they should use the self-assessment tool at www.811healthline.ca or call 811 to determine if testing is required.

If you have seen a patient meeting exposure criteria for COVID-19 and ordered a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab you will receive the results. Please be aware that such a patient is required to self-isolate for 14 days post last date of exposure, even if the swab is negative. A negative NP swab does not release the patient from the quarantine period. If the result is positive, Public Health officials will follow-up with regard to contact tracing.

As testing clinics open across the province you may have patients calling you for test results. If you have not taken the swab, please don't report results if you are not aware of the clinical context as many patients with negative results will need to be advised that they are still required to complete their 14 days of self-isolation. A negative swab does not necessarily mean that they can end their self-isolation. Patients will be advised of their results and the appropriate follow-up.

COVID-19 testing has been added to the standard respiratory panel to aid in community surveillance. Therefore any NP swabs done for ILI testing are automatically tested for COVID-19 even without exposure criteria. If these tests are negative and the patient has no exposure criteria they do not need to be isolated for the COVID-19 incubation period of 14 days.

Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health and Microbiology Lab (PHML) is now certified to report negative swab results for COVID-19 without awaiting confirmation by the National Microbiology Lab (NML). As this is a new test, PHML results needed to be validated by the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg. All positive test results will be reported as presumptive until the provincial lab has validation for positive test results from the National Lab in Winnipeg. Public Health will, of course, be responding to presumptive positives.



Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Department of Health and Community Services

COVID-19 is listed on the notifiable disease list under the *Public Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Healthcare providers have a duty to report a laboratory or clinical diagnosed case of COVID-19 in writing within 24 hours

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