

**To:** Physicians and Nurse Practitioners  
**From:** Janice Fitzgerald, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Acting)  
**Re:** COVID-19 Update  
**Date:** March 2, 2020

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The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Department of Health and Community Services, in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), continues to monitor the developing outbreak of COVID-19. Community transmission has now been identified in countries other than China.

PHAC has updated the interim case definition of COVID-19 to reflect changes in global virus transmission. The exposure criteria includes a list of affected areas to help inform decision making by healthcare professionals who are involved in the assessment and management of COVID-19. Healthcare professionals are encouraged to visit the link below when screening individuals with concerns related to COVID-19:

Case Definition:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/national-case-definition>

Affected Areas List:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/covid-19-affected-areas-list.html>

### Reporting requirements

Under the *Public Health Prevention and Promotion Regulations*, health care practitioners are required to **immediately report** any suspected cases of infection due to COVID-19 to the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) on call at 1-866-270-7437. Those in acute or long-term care facilities are required to **immediately notify** Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) of any suspect case in your facility.

### **Primary Care Practitioners**

If you see a person who is symptomatic and meets exposure criteria:

- Immediately provide the person with a surgical mask and isolate in a room with the door closed.
- Don your own personal protection equipment (PPE) before entering the room and completing a clinical assessment. PPE includes surgical mask with eye shield, gown, and gloves. For more information on donning and doffing PPE, visit: <https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/infectionpreventionandcontrol.html>.
- If the patient is in medical distress, immediately refer to the closest emergency department (ED). Ensure the person remains masked and inform the ED and paramedicine (if called) that a person with symptoms who meets exposure criteria for COVID-19 is en route.
- Call the MOH on call to report the case 1-866-270-7437.
- If the patient is not in medical distress, call the MOH on call to report the case and discuss further actions.

### **Acute Care Settings**

If a person who is symptomatic and meets the exposure criteria presents to an acute care facility:

- Immediately provide the person with a surgical mask and isolate in a room with the door closed, preferably a negative pressure room in the event that the patient needs an aerosolizing procedure.
- Don your own PPE for droplet and contact precautions before entering the room and completing a clinical assessment.
- Call the MOH on call to report the case 1-866-270-7437.
- Notify Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) in your facility.
- In addition to routine practices, such patients must be managed with contact and droplet precautions (including eye protection). N95 respirators are necessary during aerosol-generating procedures (e.g. intubation, CPR, and bronchoscopy) as well as for nasopharyngeal swab collection.

For more information related to COVID-19 as well as screening tools that healthcare professionals can utilize, please visit the Department of Health and Community Services website dedicated to coronavirus:

<https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/coronavirus/>

Please note that this is an evolving situation and guidance documents may change as we continue to learn more about COVID-19. Please refer to the PHAC and Health and Community Services websites for up to date information and tools.