

HALTON REGION PUBLIC HEALTH • Office of the Medical Officer of Health

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TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments

FROM: Dr. Hamidah Meghani, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: March 4, 2020

RE: Update on COVID-19

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### QUICK FACTS

- Iran is now considered a country with high-risk exposure. Travelers returning from Iran should self-isolate for 14 days after returning, even if not symptomatic, and report to Halton Region Public Health.
- At this time, a fit-tested N95 mask is required for clinical assessment (e.g. physical exam) AND testing for COVID-19 in Ontario.
- A single nasopharyngeal swab is sufficient for [COVID-19 testing](#).

### KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

#### Case definition:

Current case definition for Person Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 is:

- A person with fever and/or new onset of cough or difficulty breathing **AND** any of the following within 14 days prior to onset of illness:
  - Travel to an **Impacted Area**\*
  - Close contact with a confirmed or possible case of COVID-19, or
  - Close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to an impacted area
- **\*Impacted Area** includes all countries with a Government of Canada [Travel Health Advisory for COVID-19](#). As of March 4, 2020, this includes China, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Singapore and South Korea.

#### Clinical assessment and testing:

- The list of COVID-19 impacted areas is changing frequently, so testing a patient for COVID-19 will require clinical judgment and depend on symptoms, medical history, travel history, and contact history.
- All primary care providers should follow [Routine Practices](#) plus droplet and contact precautions when providing care to patients with respiratory symptoms.
- If the patient is a possible PUI, the primary care provider must wear a N95 respirator (in addition to droplet/contact precautions) during clinical assessment and testing.
- Where the primary care provider is unable to safely use an N95 respirator, they should use a procedure mask to conduct a clinical history and visual assessment while under contact/droplet precautions and maintaining a two-meter distance from the patient. Call Public Health to discuss

the most appropriate way for the patient to be clinically assessed and tested at an alternate location.

- Please refer to the Ministry's [Guidance for Primary Care Providers](#) for details regarding screening, assessment, and testing.

#### PPE:

Health care providers facing immediate challenges (less than 10 days of supply) with their personal protective equipment (PPE) supply levels can email the ministry at [EOCLogistics.MOH@ontario.ca](mailto:EOCLogistics.MOH@ontario.ca)

#### Reporting:

Primary care providers must report all persons tested for COVID-19 to Halton Region Public Health by calling 311

#### Disinfection:

- The room where a PUI is isolated or assessed and any public areas used by the PUI must be cleaned and disinfected.
- Any product with a DIN number and a label claim against enveloped viruses is expected to be able to kill COVID-19 when used according to manufacturer's instructions regarding proper concentration, contact time, and whether surfaces require pre-cleaning.
- For further information on disinfection, please refer to the Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee, [Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and Control of Infections in All Health Care Settings](#), 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, April 2018.

#### **KEY MESSAGES FOR PATIENTS**

- Before making travel plans, check the Government of Canada [travel advisories](#) for up-to-date information on areas impacted by COVID-19. Consider avoiding non-essential travel to impacted areas.
- Travelers who have returned from **Hubei province** OR **Iran** should (even if not symptomatic):
  - Self-isolate and avoid close contact with others, including those in their home, for 14 days after their return; AND
  - Report to Halton Region Public Health by calling 311
- Travelers who have returned from other **impacted areas** should:
  - Self-monitor for signs and symptoms for 14 days after their return
  - If symptoms develop, self-isolate and contact Halton Region Public Health by calling 311. If symptoms are severe, call 911 and inform them of symptoms and travel history.
- While the risk of COVID-19 infection in our community continues to remain low at this time, stay informed by regularly visiting the Halton Region Public Health website at [halton.ca/coronavirus](http://halton.ca/coronavirus).

Please report all suspected/confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) to Public Health immediately by calling 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

PLEASE POST IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND PHYSICIAN LOUNGES  
IF YOU CAN'T ACCESS HYPERLINKS, PLEASE SIGN UP FOR ELECTRONIC UPDATES BY EMAILING  
DOCTORS@HALTON.CA

