

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

TEL: 905-825-6000 • TOLL FREE: 1-866-442-5866 • FAX: 905-825-1444

TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments

FROM: Dr. Deepika Lobo, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: February 3, 2021

RE: COVID-19 Variants of Concern and patient access to primary care

QUICK FACTS

- Halton Region Public Health has identified one confirmed case of a COVID-19 variant of concern (VoC) that was travel related.
- Multiple COVID-19 VoCs are circulating, including in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil. The UK variant is currently spreading in Ontario. As of February 1, there were 109 cases of B.1.1.7 (UK variant) and one case of B.1.351 (South African variant).
- Most of the VoCs are more transmissible than previous strains of COVID-19 and some raise concerns about re-infection and vaccine effectiveness.

KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Infection prevention and control measures remain the same for VoC cases.
- Halton Region Public Health has updated, enhanced case management guidance which includes:
 - Enhanced contact management for all cases in the province and
 - Enhanced case management for VoC screen positive cases.
- Increased transmissibility of variants means it will take more intensive effort of the same public health practices to prevent transmitting infection.
- Primary care providers can see patients in-person, provided adequate screening and appropriate [PPE](#) is available. Patients do not need a negative COVID-19 test to seek medical care, unless screening dictates testing is needed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) for COVID-19 prevention](#), Public Health Ontario
- [SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19 Virus\) Variant of Concern \(VoC\) Surveillance](#), Public Health Ontario
- [COVID-19 UK Variant VOC-202012/01 – What we know so far](#), Public Health Ontario

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.

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