

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 16, 2020

RE: **Interim Recommendations for COVID-19 Testing**

Interim Testing Recommendations

- **Testing recommendations are continually evolving and may change again.**
- Asymptomatic individuals should NOT be tested at this time.
- At this time, the following groups will be prioritized for COVID-19 testing in Halton Region **due to availability of resources.**
 - Individuals with acute respiratory illness (regardless of travel history) who:
 - Are healthcare workers;
 - Reside in long term care homes and retirement homes;
 - Are contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases;
 - Have severe symptoms and are being admitted to hospital;
 - Are directed by Halton Region Public Health to be tested;
 - Are First Nation Community members living on-reserve.
- Individuals who have returned from travel outside of Canada in the past 14 days and develop MILD symptoms, **DO NOT** require testing. They are to self-isolate until 24 hours after all symptoms fully resolve OR their 14 day period of self-isolation is complete (whichever is longer).
- Decisions to test outside of these recommendations are based on public health and clinical judgment and can be made in consultation with Halton Region Public Health.
- Report all individuals who are tested to Halton Region Public Health.

Updated IPAC recommendations for use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- **Droplet and Contact precautions are recommended for the routine care of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 including collection of nasopharyngeal swab for testing.**
- Airborne precautions are only required when aerosol generating medical procedures are performed on patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Sample collection with a nasopharyngeal swab is **not** considered aerosol generating.

Updated guidance for returning travellers

- **Returning travellers from outside of Canada (including United States of America) should self-isolate for 14 days from the day of return.**
- If they develop symptoms within 14 days, they should stay at home and avoid close contact with others, including others at home, until 24 hours after symptoms have resolved or 14 days after returning from travel, whichever is longer.

- People with mild symptoms **DO NOT** require testing.

KEY MESSAGES FOR PATIENTS

- The Government of Canada is recommending the following for all Canadians:
 - **Avoid all non-essential travel** outside of Canada, until further notice;
 - **Avoid all travel on cruise ships**, until further notice.
- **ALL returning travellers** (including travellers from United States of America) should self-isolate for 14 days even if asymptomatic.
- **Not everyone requires testing**; most people will have mild symptoms and recover in a few days.
- If you have MILD symptoms and can manage symptoms reasonably at home, stay home, self-isolate until 24 hours AFTER symptoms have FULLY resolved.
- In order to decrease community transmission of COVID-19, Halton Region Public Health is recommending that all residents practice social distancing. This involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with. For further information please visit our website at halton.ca/COVID19.

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