

MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS ALERT – April 7, 2020

Update: COVID-19 Assessment and Testing Guidance

Please note that the situation continues to evolve rapidly and the criteria for screening and testing may change.

Any primary care practitioner/ physician may now order COVID-19 testing in Interior Health without consulting the local Medical Health Officer (MHO).

The COVID – 19 testing criteria has expanded as of April 7, 2020. Please see [Testing for COVID-19 \[https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/CommunicableDiseaseControl/covid19/IH-PH-COV-247%20Testing%20for%20COVID-19%20QA_26Mar2020.pdf\]\(https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/CommunicableDiseaseControl/covid19/IH-PH-COV-247%20Testing%20for%20COVID-19%20QA_26Mar2020.pdf\)](https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/CommunicableDiseaseControl/covid19/IH-PH-COV-247%20Testing%20for%20COVID-19%20QA_26Mar2020.pdf) for details.

COVID-19 testing is recommended for individuals with symptoms who are:

- Hospitalized, or likely to be hospitalized, including pregnant women in their 3rd trimester, patients on hemodialysis, or cancer patients receiving radiation or chemotherapy
- Health Care Workers in roles critical to direct patient care delivery or in roles that are critical to supporting patient care delivery (deemed essential)
- Residents and HCWs of long term care facilities who develop new respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, however mild, including fever, cough, shortness of breath, rhinorrhea, dysphagia, vomiting or diarrhea (outbreak management)
- Residents of remote, isolated or indigenous communities
- People living in congregate settings such as work-camps, correctional facilities and shelters
- Homeless people
- Part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak (this testing will be organized by the Communicable Disease Unit (CDU)/Medical Health Officer (MHO))

Testing should be performed ONLY on symptomatic patients. Testing should not be done prior to 24 hours from symptom onset as testing too early may result in a negative test.

What are considered symptoms of COVID-19?

<p>Mild Symptoms may include some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-grade fever • Cough • Malaise (overall feeling of discomfort) • Rhinorrhea (runny nose) • Fatigue (extreme feeling of tiredness) • Sore throat • Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea 	<p>Severe Symptoms may include any of the mild symptoms, as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Shortness of breath • Difficulty breathing and/or chest pain
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Previous MHO Updates and Alerts available: <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/AboutUs/Leadership/MHO/Pages/MHOUpdates.aspx>

Chief Medical Health Officer: Dr. Sue Pollock

Medical Health Officers: Dr. Kamran Golmohammadi, Dr. Silvina Mema, Dr. Karin Goodison, Dr. Carol Fenton and Dr. Rob Parker

Duty MHO line (24/7) 1-866-457-5648

IH-PH-COV-009 07APR2020

For all patients tested:

- Offer them a surgical mask and place them in a separate room.
- Use contact and droplet precautions during sample collection. This includes gloves, gowns, surgical mask and eye protection. An N95 respirator is NOT necessary.
- Obtain a Nasopharyngeal (red top) swab
- Send samples through your regular process to the BCCDC Provincial Laboratory and ensure that the requisition indicates testing for “Novel Coronavirus PCR”



If you decide to test for COVID-19, please advise the patient to self-isolate until they receive a negative test result (See patient handout on page 3). Patients may access their test results by calling the BC Centre for Disease Control COVID results hotline at 1-833-707-2792 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm).

Once a patient has been tested:

- If the patient is well enough to return home, discharge the patient with surgical mask and advise the patient to isolate at home until they receive a test result. Please give the patient the information on self-isolation provided on the next page.
- If results are positive, IHA Public Health will be notified immediately and will follow up directly with the patient and any contacts.

Individuals who do not meet the testing criteria, but who are symptomatic, should be asked to self-isolate at home until the following criteria are met:

- a) At least 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms; AND
- b) At least 72 hours have passed since resolution of fever; AND
- c) Symptoms (respiratory, gastrointestinal, and systemic) have improved

Coughing may persist for several weeks and does not mean the individual is infectious and must self-isolate.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) or On-call Medical Health Officer (MHO)

- Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) 1-866-778-7736 (M-F 8:30 to 16:30) OR
- On-call Medical Health Officer (MHO) 1-866-457-5648 (after hours and weekends)

The CDU or On call MHO can assist with the risk assessment for COVID-19 for your patient if needed

For the most up to date COVID-19 information please go to:

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/CommunicableDiseaseControl/Pages/Breaking-News-and-Info.aspx>

Information about the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) for patients being tested and/or cared for in the community

Your doctor has determined that you can safely be cared for at home. To prevent the spread of contagious respiratory illnesses including novel coronavirus, we advise that you **self-isolate at home until your test results are complete**.

Your test results will be available within 7 days. You may call the BC Centre for Disease Control Results Hotline for your test results at 1-833-707-2792 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm)

Instructions for Self-Isolation

1. **Stay home except to get urgent medical care** – Do not go to work, school, or public areas (e.g. places of worship, stores, shopping malls, and restaurants). Cancel non-urgent appointments. Do not use public transportation including buses, taxis, or ride sharing. Your doctor may provide you with a note excusing you from work or school.
2. **Wear a face mask** – Wear a face mask when you are in the same room with other people and when you visit a health care facility. If your mask gets wet or dirty, change it. **Please note:** A face mask refers to a surgical/procedure mask. N95 respirator masks are not required by the patient or household contacts.
3. **Separate yourself from other people in your home** – Stay and sleep in a well-ventilated room separate from other people. Use a separate bathroom if available. Use a face mask in shared spaces. Household members should stay in another home or place of residence if possible, especially if they have compromised immune systems or chronic health conditions. Restrict visitors. However, it is ok to have friends/family drop off food or you can use delivery/pick up services for errands such as grocery shopping.
4. **Do not prepare food for others in your household**
5. **Avoid sharing household items** - Do not share dishes, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with people in your home. After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water.
6. **Cover your coughs and sneezes** – Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough/sneeze, or cough/sneeze into your sleeve instead of your hand. Throw used tissues into a lined trash can in your room before disposal with other household waste. Immediately wash your hands.
7. **Wash your hands** – Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use disposable paper towels when possible. For more information on handwashing see <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/hand-washing>. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based sanitizer; however, always wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
8. **Flush toilet with the lid down** – the virus may also be present in stool.
9. **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces** – Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g. counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables) once per day with regular household disinfectant containing 1 part bleach to 9 parts water.
10. **Notify health care facilities before you visit** – Call ahead before visiting a health-care facility, and advise them that you have or are being tested for novel coronavirus. Remind health-care providers when you arrive. This will help health-care facilities to take steps to keep other people from becoming infected.
11. **Monitor your symptoms** – Seek medical attention if you have trouble breathing, are unable to tolerate fluids, or if your illness is worsening. Notify health care facilities and health care providers (e.g. emergency departments, ambulance paramedics, doctors' offices) before you visit.