

Special Bulletin

from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health



Date: March 24, 2020 **Updates**

To: Nova Scotia Health Care Providers (including 811/911)

Topic: 2019 Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)

Updates:

- Geographic areas expanded to any travel outside of Nova Scotia due to spread within Canada
- Health Protection Act order in effect as of March 23rd
- Patients to complete the online 811 questionnaire prior to calling 811

With rapid global spread of SARS-CoV-2, Nova Scotia continues to enhance surveillance activities. We are shifting the surveillance focus to include anyone who has travelled **outside of Nova Scotia**. Effective March 23rd, people who have travelled outside of Nova Scotia will be instructed at border entry points and through public messaging to:

- 1) self-isolate for 14 days from the day they entered Nova Scotia
- 2) complete the online 811 questionnaire if they are symptomatic

This 14-day self-isolation period is a requirement under the March 23rd Health Protection Act order. Other aspects of this order are outlined at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/#alerts>

The full Health Protection Act order is at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/COVID-19-Global-Order-2020-03-23.PDF>

Patient Screening

To minimize the possibility of a COVID-19 patient not being identified as they present for health care, COVID-19 screening of patients needs to be continued using the triage screening tool on the reverse side.

Clinicians with concerns about COVID-19 in a patient who has not travelled outside of Nova Scotia can contact their local Medical Officer of Health (MOH) to discuss testing. During business hours, the local MOH can be contacted through the appropriate regional hospital switchboard (in Central Zone this is QEII locating); after hours phone 902-473-2222 and ask for the MOH on-call.

Testing

Specimens needed for testing for standard respiratory viruses and SARS-CoV2 will be taken at the ED/alternate testing site and forwarded to the QEII Microbiology Laboratory. Detailed information on testing and appropriate infection control/personal protection equipment has been provided by the NSHA and IWK. Further disposition of the patient will be determined by the attending health care provider.

Office-based Infection Prevention and Control

Follow standard precautions in your office/community clinic as you would for other respiratory illnesses:

- screen patients on intake and for those with respiratory symptoms provide a surgical/procedure mask (N95 not required) and separate from other patients (a 2-meter separation is recommended).
- ask patients to practice respiratory/cough etiquette (wear a surgical/procedure mask and use tissues for coughing, sneezing, and controlling nasal secretions with immediate disposal of tissue in waste receptacle followed by hand hygiene).
- practice good hand hygiene (both patient and care provider) by using alcohol-based hand rub or water/soap if hands are visibly soiled.

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Intake/Triage Screening Tool

March 23, 2020

A recent travel and immunization history should always be obtained from individuals presenting with a complaint that could be an infectious disease. As per standard of care, individuals presenting with respiratory symptoms should don a surgical/procedure mask.

The following information should be obtained from patients who present for care in an emergency department or primary health care setting (e.g. university health clinics, family practice office, walk-in clinic, outpatient clinics, ambulatory care and specialty care) or to assist in responses for EHS Communications Centre and 811.

Question 1:

In the past 14 days, has the patient travelled outside of Nova Scotia?

Question 2:

In the past 14 days, has the patient been in close contact (within 2 meters) with a confirmed case of COVID-19?

Question 3:

In the past 14 days, has the patient been in close contact with a person with fever (over 38°C) OR a new onset (or exacerbation of chronic) cough who has travelled outside of Nova Scotia within 14 days prior to their illness onset?

*If the patient answers **NO** to Question 1, 2 AND 3, triage as per norm*

*If the answer is **YES** to Question 1, 2 OR 3, ask Question 4.*

Question 4:

Does the patient have fever or symptoms of a fever (over 38°C) OR new onset of (or exacerbation of chronic) cough?

*If the patient answers **YES** to Question 4,*

- *In a community setting, for information on COVID-19 assessment centres call 811. 811 will provide information on the nearest location for these assessment centres. Please do not send a patient to an assessment centre without having been referred by 811. In the event an individual requires more urgent care, 811 will provide information on accessing emergency departments.*
- *In hospital settings, follow NSHA/IWK procedures.*
- *Notification of Public Health **IS NOT** required as this will be done through the electronic laboratory information system.*

*If the patient answers **NO** to Question 4,*

Advise patient to continue to self-isolate, monitor their health and complete the online 811 questionnaire if they become symptomatic.