

New COVID-19 Testing Guidance Issued from Ministry

Update to York Region health care providers as of April 9, 2020

On April 8, 2020, Ontario's Ministry of Health issued new guidance on testing for COVID-19. It highlights four priority groups to further increase the testing of Ontarians. The guidance gives details on these groups, and when to test members of each category.

As a reminder, testing of asymptomatic individuals is generally not recommended. Despite this guidance, clinicians may continue to use their discretion to make decisions on which individuals to test. Symptomatic individuals are encouraged to seek assessment at one of three COVID-19 Assessment Centres in York Region at Southlake Regional Health Centre, Mackenzie Health and Markham Stouffville Hospital.

Recommended for COVID-19 testing by the Ministry of Health

1. Hospital inpatients and residents living in Long-Term Care or Retirement Homes (LTCH/RH)

Definition: Patients requiring/likely requiring inpatient admission OR residents living in either LTCH or RH.

Any patient/resident under the following guidelines should be tested:

a. Symptomatic patients/residents who are experiencing one of the following symptoms, revised from previous guidance:

- Fever (Temperature of 37.8°C or greater); OR
- Any new/worsening acute respiratory illness symptom (e.g. cough, shortness of breath (dyspnea), sore throat, runny nose or sneezing, nasal congestion, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing); OR
- Clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia.
- Atypical presentations of COVID-19 should be considered, particularly in elderly persons.

b. Asymptomatic patients:

- Testing of asymptomatic new admissions or re-admissions to a LTCH/RH should be performed within the first 14 days under the direction of the overseeing clinician.
- Patients transferred from hospital to a LTCH/RH should be tested prior to the transfer. All patients should remain under a 14-day self-isolation period following transfer.
- In the event of a symptomatic resident in an institutional setting (e.g., LTCH/RH, shelter, mental health institution, prison, hospice and other congregate living settings), asymptomatic residents living in the same room should be tested immediately along with the symptomatic resident. All close contacts should remain under a 14-day self-isolation period following contact.
- In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 in a LTCH/RH, asymptomatic contacts of a confirmed case should be tested including:
 - All residents living in adjacent rooms
 - All staff working on the unit/care hub
 - All essential visitors that attended at the unit/care hub

2. Health care workers/caregivers/care providers/first responders

All healthcare workers, caregivers, care providers, and first responders should be tested **as soon as possible** if they develop any symptom compatible with COVID-19, including atypical symptoms.

3. Remote/Isolated/Rural/Indigenous communities

Testing should be offered to individuals who are experiencing one of the following symptoms:

- Fever (Temperature of 37.8°C or greater); OR
- Any new/worsening acute respiratory illness symptom (e.g. cough, shortness of breath (dyspnea), sore throat, runny nose or sneezing, nasal congestion, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing); OR
- Clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia.
- Atypical presentations of COVID-19 should be considered, particularly in elderly persons and children.

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a remote, isolated, rural or Indigenous community, testing of contacts can be considered in consultation with the local public health unit.

4. Priorities in situations of resource shortages

Where there are shortages of testing supplies, the following groups should be **prioritized** for testing within 24 hours to inform public health and clinical management for these individuals:

- Symptomatic health care workers (regardless of care delivery setting) and staff who work in health care facilities
- Symptomatic residents and staff in Long Term Care facilities and retirement homes and other institutional settings e.g. Mental Health institutions and homeless shelters (as per outbreak guidance)
- Hospitalized patients admitted with respiratory symptoms (new or exacerbated)
- Symptomatic members of remote, isolated, rural and/or indigenous communities
- Symptomatic travellers identified at a point of entry to Canada
- Symptomatic first responders (i.e., firefighters, police)
- Individuals referred for testing by local public health

Atypical Symptoms/Signs of COVID-19

Symptoms: Unexplained fatigue/malaise; Delirium (acutely altered mental status and inattention); Falls; Acute functional decline; Exacerbation of chronic conditions; Digestive symptoms, including nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain; Chills; Headaches ; Croup

Signs: Unexplained tachycardia, including age specific tachycardia for children; Decrease in blood pressure; Unexplained hypoxia (even if mild i.e. O₂ sat <90%); Lethargy, difficulty feeding in infants (if no other diagnosis)

For more information

Call our dedicated health professional COVID-19 line at **1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280** (8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week, after hours call 905-953-6478). Continue to visit york.ca/healthprofessionals, york.ca/covid19 and Ontario.ca/covid19 for up to date information on COVID-19.