

# Additional Guidance for COVID-19 from Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario

## COVID-19 update to York Region health care providers as of March 26, 2020

The COVID-19 situation in Ontario is evolving rapidly. Additional guidance has recently been issued for health professionals from Ontario's Ministry of Health (the Ministry) and Public Health Ontario (PHO). As a reminder, please continue to visit [york.ca/healthprofessionals](http://york.ca/healthprofessionals) and [york.ca/covid19](http://york.ca/covid19) for the latest information.

### Ministry Updates on COVID-19 Actions

On March 25, 2020, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health provided some updates on actions the Ministry is taking as part of its response to COVID-19. Ministry actions include:

- Accelerating activities to reduce the backlog of laboratory tests and increase provincial testing capacity
- Developing guidance regarding the appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for non-health care workers. *(Note: York Region Public Health will share this guidance as soon as it is made available.)*
- Continuing to pursue all options to secure additional supplies and equipment, with a priority focus on masks and ventilators
- Launching a volunteer website to mobilize available workforce capacity towards the provincial response to COVID-19
- Increasing Telehealth's intake and response capacity
- Identifying additional bed capacity in alternative community settings to support individuals who are homeless or in shelters and health care workers needing temporary housing arrangements

The Ministry also issued a new guidance document for Consumption and Treatment Services sites. Please visit [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019\\_guidance.aspx](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx) to view the current guidance documents for your specific sector. The link to this document is also available on our health professionals website.

### Who should be tested for COVID-19?

PHO provided new guidance on COVID-19 testing, as the Province moves from predominantly travel-related cases to increased local transmission of COVID-19. **Testing for COVID-19 should be based on clinical assessment, and not based on the case definition. Generally speaking, asymptomatic well individuals should not be tested.**

### **NOTE: ALL SYMPTOMATIC WORKERS IN ANY HEALTH CARE SETTING SHOULD BE TESTED FOR COVID-19.**

At this time, all specimens will be tested if submitted. However, if/where there are shortages of testing supplies, the following groups should be **prioritized** for testing 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 and Retirement Homes
- 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 individuals who work in child care settings or live/work in shelters, group homes, or other settings with vulnerable individuals (e.g., those with weakened immune systems, older adults, those with underlying health conditions etc.)



## **Recommendations on self-isolation and health care workers returning to work**

Please see Appendix 1 following this message for additional information on self-isolation and criteria for discharge from self-isolation. This includes guidance for health care workers who have been tested or are symptomatic.

For more information, call York Region Public Health at **1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280** for additional support or you can email [CIDIntakeLine@york.ca](mailto:CIDIntakeLine@york.ca). Continue to visit [york.ca/healthprofessionals](http://york.ca/healthprofessionals), [york.ca/covid19](http://york.ca/covid19) and [Ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://Ontario.ca/coronavirus) for up to date information on COVID-19.

## APPENDIX 1: SELF-ISOLATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCHARGE GUIDANCE

Patient Description	Self-Isolation Requirements
Asymptomatic AND no exposure	No self-isolation requirement. Provide reassurance and refer them to COVID-19 websites <a href="http://york.ca/covid19">york.ca/covid19</a> and <a href="http://Ontario.ca/covid19">Ontario.ca/covid19</a> . A self-assessment tool is available online.
Asymptomatic AND exposure	Provide information on continued self-monitoring and self-isolation for 14 days from exposure risk or symptoms starting.
Symptomatic AND no known exposure to COVID-19	Should self-isolate for 14 days after symptom onset. Household contacts and other close contacts while the individual was ill OR in the 48 hours prior to onset of symptoms should also self-isolate for 14 days.
Symptomatic AND exposure to COVID-19	
Tested for COVID-19 AND results are pending/negative/positive	

**NOTE:** Exposure means close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 OR close contact with an individual with acute respiratory illness

### Discharging someone from isolation after being diagnosed with COVID-19

For each of the scenarios below, isolation after symptom onset should be for the duration specified and provided that the individual is afebrile and symptoms are improving. Absence of cough is not required for those known to have chronic cough or who are experiencing reactive airways post-infection. Once a case is discharged from isolation, their case status should be updated to 'resolved'.

- For individuals **at home:**
  - 14 days following symptom onset
  - This applies to individuals whether they were confirmed by testing, and individuals who were not tested but have symptoms compatible with COVID-19
- For individuals **hospitalized:**
  - Isolate in hospital until 2 negative tests, obtained at least 24 hours apart
  - If discharged home within 14 days of symptom onset, follow advice for individuals at home
- For **health care workers:**
  - For return to work, 2 negative tests are required, obtained at least 24 hours apart
  - If critical for operations, health care workers may return to work 14 days after symptom onset while wearing appropriate PPE, and continuing use of appropriate PPE until 2 negative specimens at least 24 hours apart.

### Health care workers who have been advised to self-isolate for a period of 14 days but who are not a case of COVID-19:

If particular health care workers are deemed **critical**, by all parties, to continued operations, they *may* be able to return to work sooner than 14 days if these workers undergo regular screening, use appropriate PPE for the 14 days and undertake active self-monitoring, including taking their temperature twice daily to monitor for fever and any symptoms compatible with COVID-19, and immediately self-isolate if symptoms develop and self-identify to their occupational health and safety department

- ✓ *These health care workers should adhere to the above and continue to follow self-isolation instructions outside of the workplace and in the home*
- ✓ *These health care workers should not work in multiple locations*