



Renfrew County and District Health Unit
"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

Memorandum

Date: March 6, 2020

To: Health Care Partners

From: Melissa Botz, Coordinator, Communications and Emergency Preparedness

Subject: **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Update #9**

Dear Health Care Partners,

Renfrew County and District Public Health Unit (RCDHU) would like to alert you to the [following advice to returning travelers](#) recently posted on the Public Health Agency of Canada's COVID-19 webpage:

"If you have travelled outside Canada, it is important to monitor your health when you return to Canada. While abroad, you may have come in contact with the novel coronavirus. PHAC asks that you monitor your health for fever, cough and difficulty breathing for 14 days after you arrive in Canada. If you have these symptoms, call the public health authority in the province or territory you are in to inform them."

Ontario's Ministry of Health last updated their COVID-19 [case definition](#) on February 26, 2020. Please check the list of [affected areas](#) regularly:

- As of March 6, 2020, affected areas with established local transmission include China (mainland), Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea.

Public Health Ontario Laboratory (PHOL) has updated their recommendations around [specimen collection](#) for COVID-19:

- For ambulatory patients not admitted to hospital (including those in ER), only one upper respiratory tract specimen will be accepted for COVID-19 testing. Upper respiratory tract specimens include a nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) or viral throat swab collected in universal transport medium. NPS is preferred over a viral throat swab (higher sensitivity).
- For hospitalized patients, it is recommended to continue to collect a minimum of two specimens, from two different sites ([see website for details](#)). PHOL will perform testing for

other respiratory viruses for samples submitted for COVID-19 only if requested on the PHOL requisition.

- Routine testing of asymptomatic persons for COVID-19 is not recommended.
- Pre-approval for COVID-19 testing is not required, provided that the clinician include the mandatory information included on the PHOL requisition.

COVID-19 is reportable under Ontario's public health legislation. RCDHU should be notified regarding any individuals being tested for COVID-19:

- If you suspect an individual may be infected with COVID-19, report the suspected case to RCDHU by calling call 613-735-8653, extension 555, during office hours, and 613-735-9926 during evenings, weekends and holidays.
- Advise any tested patient to self-isolate and await further instructions from RCDHU.

RCDHU is attaching the communication from Public Health Ontario regarding additional COVID-19 testing.

If you need to consult with RCDHU to determine if your patient is a person under investigation please call 613-735-8653 extension 555, during office hours, and 613-735-9926 during evenings, weekends and holidays

URLs to above websites:

Public Health Agency of Canada's COVID-19- For returning travellers:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html#f>

Ontario's Ministry of Health COVID-19 case definition:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.asp
[x](#)

Public Health Agency of Canada affected areas: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/covid-19-affected-areas-list.html>

Public Health Ontario Laboratory Testing: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-information-index/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>

The public health risk associated with COVID-19 to Canadians is low.

Please contact RCDHU at 613-735-8654, extension 555, if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Melissa Botz

Coordinator, Communications and Emergency Preparedness