

March 6th, 2020

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COVID-19 Update #4

This guidance replaces previous MHO Newsletters regarding COVID-19.

- **Medical Health Officers and Medical Microbiologists DO NOT need to be notified for COVID-19 testing OR suspect cases.**
 - Testing is available for patients with compatible symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, or difficulty breathing) AND history of travel to affected areas two weeks prior to illness onset OR other index of suspicion (e.g., contact with an ill person with such travel history).
 - **Asymptomatic patients should not be tested for COVID-19**
 - Community specimens will be processed at the Provincial Public Health lab, so can be sent via your usual lab courier.
 - Clearly indicate “novel coronavirus”, symptoms and specific exposure/travel history.
 - If you have a **high index of suspicion** for COVID-19, such as a patient with close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, the specimen should be sent to an Island Health lab so it can be prioritized for quicker processing.
 - Clearly indicate “novel coronavirus”, symptoms and specific exposure/travel history on the lab requisition.
- **Only ONE specimen is recommended for community or outpatient testing. NP swab is preferred.**
- **Any patient with respiratory symptoms that is tested for influenza/RSV will now also have COVID-19 testing done.** This primarily will be done on hospital inpatients and sentinel community influenza sites.
- Health Canada is now advising returning travellers from **Iran and Hubei, China** to **self-isolate** at home for 14 days, and to seek care if they develop symptoms in that period. Returning travellers from other COVID-19 affected countries are advised to closely **self-monitor** for 14 days and promptly self-isolate at home if they develop symptoms, and call a healthcare provider.

Management of patients meeting the testing criteria:

Testing:

- Give the patient a surgical mask to wear and place the patient in a separate room.
- Use contact and droplet precautions (gloves, gowns, surgical mask and eye protection).
 - N95 masks are not needed for sample collection or examination.

- Obtain a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab OR throat viral swab (red top or blue top COPAN with UNIVERSAL TRANSPORT MEDIA (UTM)). *Only one specimen is recommended.*

Aftercare planning:

- If the patient is well enough to return home, discharge the patient with a surgical mask and advise the patient to isolate at home.
- Provide the “Home Isolation” document to the patient (see attachment).
- Confirm the patient’s contact information.
- Clinicians should inform patients that they can call the BCCDC Coronavirus Hotline to receive their results and guidance regarding self-isolation. Lab results should be available in most cases within 96 hours.

The BCCDC Coronavirus Hotline ([1-833-707-2792](tel:1-833-707-2792)) is available Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm.

- Should the lab results be positive, Public Health will provide direct patient follow-up.

The Island Health Medical Staff website now has a COVID-19 website with information and tools for use in community practices at <https://medicalstaff.islandhealth.ca/news-events/coronavirus-updates>.

Please also consult the BCCDC COVID-19 website for health professionals for other updates at [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/novel-coronavirus-\(covid-19\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/novel-coronavirus-(covid-19)).

We are aware of concerns regarding access to PPE in family practices. There is work underway to address this at the regional and provincial levels and we hope the solutions will be communicated soon.

Yours in Health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dee Hoyano".

Dee Hoyano, MD, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer