

IMPORTANT UPDATES ON COVID-19

To: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Nurses, Midwives
Hospital Infection Control Departments and Emergency Departments

This document includes several important updates which are linked below:

- [COVID-19 Testing Update](#)
- [Quick Reference – PH Guidance on Testing and Clearing Cases](#)
- [COVID-19 Patient Screen Guidance](#)
- [COVID-19 Symptoms](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance – Essential Workplaces](#)

Consistent across all documents are two changes:

- Consideration of seasonal allergies and post-nasal drip when assessing patients that present with ONLY runny nose, sneezing, or congestion;
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) has been added to the list of atypical symptoms.

Updated Guidance on Testing

The guidance document was updated again and contains many important descriptions. Points of interest include:

- Additional detail for transfer from hospitals to LTCH;
- Additional guidance for testing newborns;
- Added detailed testing considerations for cancer patients and hemodialysis patients;
- There are currently 10 priority groups for testing:
 1. Hospital Inpatients
 2. Residents Living in Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes
 3. Residents of other Congregate Living Settings and Institutions
 4. Persons Working in Congregate Living Settings and Institutions
 5. Healthcare Workers/ Caregivers/ Care Providers/ First Responders
 6. Persons Living in the Same Household of Healthcare Workers/ Caregivers/ Care Providers/ First Responders
 7. Remote/ Isolated/ Rural/ Indigenous Communities
 8. Specific Priority Populations (Individuals with frequent healthcare system interactions)
 9. Workers at [Essential Workplaces](#)
 10. Cross-Border Workers

Regional Assessment Centres and Surveillance Program

Regional Assessment Centres are ongoing and hours of operation have been modified to meet current demand. We are able to continue swabbing symptomatic individuals outside of the priority groups for the time being.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local Timiskaming Health Unit:

Monday to Friday

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

New Liskeard

Tel: (705) 647-4305

Toll Free: (866) 747-4305

Fax: (705) 647-5779

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Tel: (705) 567-9355

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After-Hours or Weekend

On-Call Number

(705) 647-3033

www.timiskaminghu.com

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER ALERT

May 6, 2020



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Guidance for Clearing Cases

There is new guidance on when the non-test based approach (14 days from symptom onset) versus the test based approach (two consecutive negative specimens collected at least 24 hours apart) should be used.

The test based approach is now **only** to be used in patients with severe symptoms, defined as requiring hospitalization, who will/are:

1. Remain in hospital after symptom improvement;
2. Being discharged to continue isolating in a congregate living setting.

Healthcare Workers Return to Work

- Health care workers (HCWs) should follow isolation and clearance with a non-test based approach unless they required hospitalization during the course of their illness, in which case, a test based approach is preferred;
- Symptomatic HCWs awaiting testing results must be off work;
- Asymptomatic HCWs awaiting testing results may continue to work using the appropriate precautions recommended by the facility.

Healthcare Worker Work Self Isolation

In **exceptional circumstances** where clinical care would be severely compromised without additional staffing, an early return to work of a COVID-19 positive HCW may be considered under work self-isolation recognizing the staff may still be infectious. This should only be done in consultation with the Timiskaming Health Unit.

Updated Screening Form

Attached, is the updated assessment form which includes many changes as well as a section for clients receiving Home and Community Care services. THU is working with HCC to identify swab pending and swab positive clients receiving services. **Please dispose of all the old assessment forms.**