
MEMO

Date: March 3, 2020

To: Health care providers

From: Dr. Brent Roussin Chief Provincial Public Health Officer
Lanette Siragusa, Provincial Lead,
Health System Integration & Quality,
Chief Nursing Officer, Shared Health

Subject: COVID-19 UPDATE – **UPDATED INFORMATION** & RESOURCES NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

As of February 27, 2020, 38 tests for COVID-19 have been completed in Manitoba. No laboratory-confirmed cases have been identified in the province and the overall risk of acquiring COVID-19 in Canada remains low.

Public health officials continue to monitor, gather information, assess risk and recommend evidence-based approaches for health care providers and precautions for returning travelers. Recommendations are based on current evidence and are being continuously reviewed and reassessed.

Any changes in recommended approach will be communicated to you.

Updated information is now available online and **important changes are highlighted below.**

Reminder to Check Website Regularly – Updated List of Countries with Community Transmission of COVID-19

Public health officials are monitoring regions of concern and health care providers are encouraged to refer to <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html> for most up-to-date information.

Resources for sites and staff are being regularly updated. Please refer to <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/health-providers/coronavirus-resources/> for reference materials and signage.

Self-Isolation Update (Updated to include IRAN)

Self-isolation is recommended for the following groups for 14 days after departing the areas below, or since last known contact or exposure:

- **Travelers returning from Iran**
- Travelers returning from the province of Hubei, China
- Contacts of a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19
- Laboratory workers exposed during work

Self-Monitoring Update (Updated to include self-isolation for unwell returned international travelers not awaiting testing)

Self-monitoring of symptoms of COVID-19 is recommended for the following groups for 14 days after return to Canada from international travel, or since last known contact or exposure:

- All returning international travelers
- Close contacts (within 2 meters/6 feet) of individuals with flu-like symptoms who have traveled internationally within 14 days prior to becoming sick
- Travelers who develop cold or flu-like symptoms within 14 days of returning to Canada should contact Health Links-Info Santé to determine if testing for COVID-19 should be considered. **In cases where testing is not recommended, they should self-isolate until well.**

Providers are asked to obtain a detailed travel history for symptomatic patients, including locations visited and timelines of travel for 14 days prior to onset of illness.

Providers are further asked to cross-reference international travel history of symptomatic patients with up-to-date regions of concern prior to contacting Infectious Disease to determine if COVID-19 testing is required.

Reminder to Check Travel History for Symptomatic Patients

The number of cases of COVID-19 is increasing outside China. Public health officials are monitoring regions of concern and health care providers are encouraged to refer to <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html> for most up-to-date information.

As of March 3, 2020, the list of countries with community transmission of COVID-19 has been expanded. All symptomatic patients who have returned from listed countries within the last 14 days should be tested for COVID-19.

The relevant travel history and symptoms must be included on the accompanying Cadham Provincial Laboratory (CPL) requisition. The Infectious Diseases (ID) physician on-call &/or CPL physician on-call does not need to be notified. All patients considered COVID-19 PUI will have urgent same day reporting completed by staff using the [Clinical Notification of Reportable Diseases and Conditions](#).

Individuals that are sent home pending results should be advised to self-isolate.

Symptomatic patients who have travelled internationally to countries not listed above may require laboratory testing for COVID-19. For a complete list of countries who have reported COVID-19 cases, refer to the Johns Hopkins website: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>. Collect a detailed travel &/or exposure history and consult the ID physician on-call if COVID-19 testing is being considered.

Based on clinical presentation and epidemiology, ID will notify the Medical Officer of Health and Cadham Provincial Laboratory (CPL) physician on-call to assure appropriate investigations and precautions.

Health care providers are reminded to:

- Collect a detailed travel history from ALL symptomatic patients (i.e., persons experiencing cold or flu-like symptoms).
- Implement droplet/contact precautions for ALL patients presenting with respiratory symptoms consistent with respiratory infections. This includes advising symptomatic patients and accompanying people (even if asymptomatic) to wear a procedure or surgical mask, and place patients who screen positive in a designated

separate waiting area/space (maintain 2-metre separation).

- Fill laboratory requisitions completely. **CPL requisitions requesting COVID-19 testing that do not include the relevant travel history and symptoms may be rejected.**

Laboratory Specimens

- In addition to routine investigations relevant to the patient's symptoms and care, testing for COVID-19 requires a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab placed in viral transport medium or NP aspirate. If such a specimen is being collected for ILI or presumed viral RTI, then a second swab is not required.
- At this point in the epidemic, for COVID-19 testing to occur, the following information must be included on the CPL General Requisition: travel history, relevant symptoms, and request for COVID-19.
- More severely ill patients may also require deep lung specimens be submitted, such as sputum, ETT secretions or broncho-alveolar lavage specimens.
- There is currently no serological test for the COVID-19 virus.

Health care facilities should continue to:

- **Make procedure or surgical masks available to symptomatic patients and those who meet the screening criteria outlined above.** Tissues and alcohol based hand cleanser should be made available at triage/reception areas and front entrances;
- Ensure appropriate training and re-training of proper donning and doffing procedures for personal protective equipment are ongoing;
- Ensure PPE supplies are being used appropriately as per the clinical recommendations. Monitor volume of PPE supplies and remind staff to report any unusual changes or loss in volume to managers. Supply Chain is actively engaged in Manitoba's COVID-19 Incident Management and response and are monitoring stock and supplies; AND
- Post **updated signage** (updated February 28, 2020) at entrances and triage/reception areas instructing patients with symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose, malaise, headache) to alert healthcare workers. <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/health-providers/coronavirus-resources/>

Emergency Response Services Staff are reminded to:

- Use internal service-specific protocols: including Winnipeg and Brandon 911 call screening

If you have any questions, please contact the Infection Control Professional/designate for your site/area.

Contact Information for:

- Infectious Diseases physician on-call: 204-787-2071
- Medical Officer of Health (MOH) on on-call: 204-788-8666
- Cadham Provincial Laboratory physician on-call: 204-787-2071