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**March 13, 2020**

**From the Office of Dr. Joyce Lock, Medical Officer of Health, Southwestern Public Health**

## COVID-19 Update

Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) has set up a Health System Emergency Control Group involving representatives from acute care, primary care, long term care, public health and municipalities. Led by the hospitals, we are planning assessment centres as well as addressing other health system and community needs to manage COVID-19. We commit to keeping you informed through briefing notes.

SWPH is working with its health systems partners to create a response that meets the needs of people who concerned about COVID-19.

The Ministry of Health has designated Telehealth as the primary responder for these calls. Public health has established a call centre to respond to calls as a secondary responder.

Given the volume of calls that Telehealth and public health are receiving, please be prepared to answer calls from your patients and provide them with guidance. The purpose of this bulletin is, in part, to provide you with resources that support your ability to do so.

### **UPDATED: Case Definition**

The case definition changed March 12, 2020. The definitions are **not intended to replace clinical judgment**. Case definitions are attached.

Based on the evolving situation with COVID-19, clinical testing criteria have changed.

**For clinical testing purposes the following groups should be tested:**

- Symptomatic contacts of confirmed cases, *until community transmission is established*
- Individuals admitted to hospital with acute respiratory illness (ARI)
- Health care workers with ARI
- Individuals with ARI who reside in a Long-Term Care Home or Retirement Home
- Individuals with ARI who reside in other institutions, in consultation with Public Health
- First Nations members living on reserve with ARI

#### For Additional Information about Exposure Risks

- Consult Situation Reports: **Provincial, National, Global**
- Important: *Health professionals in Canada who are involved in the assessment and management of possible COVID-19 cases and their close contacts are encouraged to consult these tables in the daily **WHO Situation Report** to help inform their decision making.*

### Assessing Clients: Important Considerations

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- All primary care settings **should** undertake active and passive screening of patients for COVID-19 and develop plans for referral when they are unable to conduct testing within their clinics.
- Primary care providers, using **droplet and contact precautions**, may conduct a clinical examination of a patient with a travel/exposure history.
- For patients meeting testing criteria, consider testing within the office. For more information, see below.
- Providers must have appropriate **cleaning procedures** for their premises to prevent transmission from an infected patient to an uninfected one.

### Required Precautions

1. Droplet and Contact precautions for the routine care of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, and
2. Airborne precautions when aerosol generating medical procedures are planned or anticipated to be performed on patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Taking a nasopharyngeal swab is NOT an aerosolizing procedure.

Reference: Ministry of Health COVID-19. Directive #1 for Health Care Providers and Health Care Entities. Issued under Section 77.7 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act. (HPPA), R.S.O.1990, c. H.7

- Patients who call your office who have travelled to an international destination should be directed to **self-isolate or self-monitor** for 14 days from the date of their return to Canada.
- If a patient, who has travelled internationally, becomes symptomatic within 14 days of their return to Canada, they are a probable case and are **reportable to public health**. Have your office gather the required information, report them to us and we will follow-up with your patient as required. [Click here for Report Form.](#)
- Information will follow regarding an upcoming telephone conference call for physicians and nurse practitioners to address questions.

### Enhanced Measures

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#### David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health has recommended, over the coming weeks:

- Avoid all non-essential travel outside of Canada.
- If you decide to travel outside of Canada with children, they will be required they will be required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days upon return.
- Colleges and universities are looking at virtual options.
- All licensed child-care centres have been asked to actively screen children, parents, staff and visitors for any symptoms and travel history that may be related to COVID-19 based on the ministry's case definition.
- Immediate suspension of all large events and public gatherings of over 250 people. Organizers who have questions about smaller gatherings are encouraged to contact their local public health unit.

### Donning and Doffing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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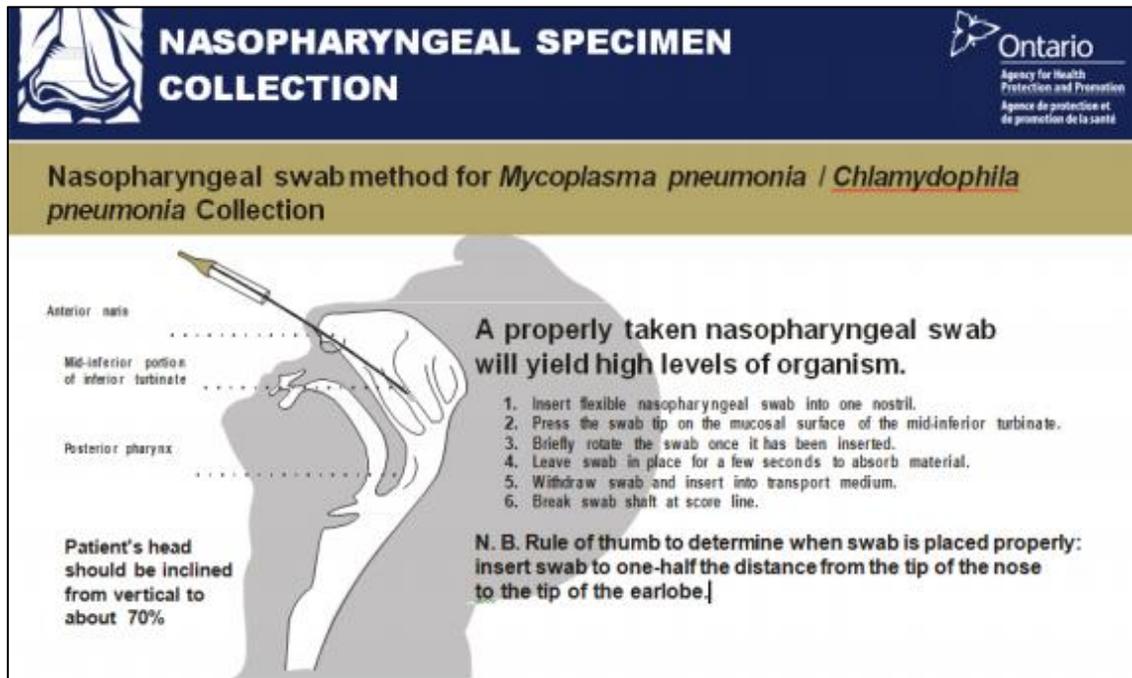
- **Videos:**
  - [Donning and doffing](#), Public Health Ontario
  - [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) For Novel Pathogens](#), Sunnybrook Hospital

- **Online Learning Modules:**
  - [Infection Prevention and Control](#), Public Health Ontario
- **Instructional Cards:**
  - [Donning and doffing](#), Public Health Ontario

## Diagnostic Testing: Collecting Nasopharyngeal Swabs

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- **Specimen Collection Video:**
  - [Collection of Nasopharyngeal Specimens, NEJM](#)
- **Ordering Nasopharyngeal Swabs:**
  - [Public Health Ontario Order Form](#)
- **Submitting Samples:**
  - [COVID-19 Test Requisition](#)



## Additional Information and Resources

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- Situation Reports: [Provincial](#), [National](#), [Global](#)
- [Synopsis of Key Articles](#): Public Health Ontario
- [Guidance Documents](#): Ministry of Health
- [COVID-19 Information and Resources](#), Ontario College of Family Physicians

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