

February 28, 2020 – 3:22 p.m.



All-staff bulletin

PHSA's weekly novel coronavirus (COVID-19) update

Sent on behalf of Dr. Réka Gustafson, Vice President of Public Health & Wellness and Deputy Provincial Health Officer

We continue to monitor the global situation closely. More information about the spectrum of illness related to COVID-19 is becoming available. For the majority, infection is mild. Risk of severe illness increases sharply for people in their 70s and 80s. Those with underlying medical conditions are also more likely to experience severe illness.

In recent days, a number of countries including Italy, Iran and South Korea have reported community transmission of COVID-19. The 14 reported cases in Canada all have a known source of infection, and we have detected no community transmission of COVID-19.

While containment efforts continue, we are also preparing and planning for the potential of more widespread transmission in our communities. Planning is similar to surge planning during influenza season and aims to ensure that our system can respond to potential increases in demand, while maintaining service to all of our patients.

Thank you to everyone who across PHSA who is involved in and helping to support this planning.

The situation in Canada:

- As of Feb. 28, Canada has reported 14 COVID-19 infections (seven in Ontario and seven in B.C.), with one presumptive confirmed case in Quebec. The first 14 individuals have recovered, or are recovering.
- The Government of Canada has issued [travel advisories](#) for countries with evidence of community transmission of COVID-19. In addition to China, travel advisories are now in place for Hong Kong, Iran, Japan, Italy, Singapore and South Korea.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) continues to assess the public health risk associated with the virus as low in Canada.
- Canadians who were repatriated from China have completed their 14 days of quarantine in Trenton, Ontario and have now been released. None of the quarantined individuals developed symptoms of COVID-19, meaning they do not pose a risk to the public.
- Canadian citizens who were quarantined aboard a cruise ship off the coast of Japan have returned to Canada and will remain in isolation for 14 days.

The situation in B.C.:

- As of Feb. 27, 1,012 individuals have been tested for COVID-19 in B.C. (seven tested positive).
- The [national case definition](#) was updated this week.
- COVID-19 testing is now recommended for individuals with a fever and/or cough who:
 - traveled to an [affected area](#); OR
 - had close contact with a confirmed case; OR
 - had close contact with a person with respiratory illness who has been to an [affected area](#) within 14 days prior to their symptom onset; OR
 - had laboratory exposure to biological material that contains COVID-19.
- For the purposes of testing, affected areas now include Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Iran and Italy.
- Please continue to check the national guidance frequently, as criteria for screening, testing and public health management will continue to be updated.

Hot topics for staff:

Communications

- The FAQs have been translated into other languages, including traditional Chinese and Punjabi.
- The Office of the Provincial Health Officer and BCCDC have also published [FAQs specifically for children and students](#).
- The translated videos mentioned in last week's all-staff bulletin have been shared through social media channels to [help dispel misinformation](#).

Lab testing in B.C.

- B.C. is now authorized for COVID-19 testing by the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) and our samples no longer need to be sent to the NML in Winnipeg for confirmatory testing.

Staff who have travelled to affected areas

- For individuals who have recently travelled to Hubei province in China, PHAC asks that they self-isolate for 14 days, even if they do not develop symptoms. [Read more information](#) for those who have recently travelled to Hubei, China.
- For individuals who have recently travelled back from other affected area (as defined by the [travel advisory](#)), PHAC asks that you:
 - monitor your health for fever, cough and difficulty breathing; and
 - avoid crowded public spaces and places where you cannot easily separate yourself from others if you become ill.
 - If you start having symptoms, isolate yourself from others as quickly as possible. Immediately call a health care professional or local public health authority. Describe your symptoms and travel history. They will provide advice on what you should do.

- Information about sick time for staff impacted by this can be found in the Hot Topics section of the [Feb. 14. all-staff bulletin](#).

Your sources of information:

- While our understanding and our response to the COVID-19 outbreaks evolve, we will be sending weekly updates to PHSA staff. Please find the previous Friday all-staff bulletins with updates on COVID-19 in the [coronavirus resources section](#) on POD.
- The BCCDC website has a publicly accessible, [dedicated area](#) for health professionals as well as [comprehensive information for the public](#)
- PHSA has a [dedicated area on POD](#). BCEHS alerts and updates are on the [BCAS intranet](#) and in the [BCEHS Handbook](#). [Note: you must be on the respective PHSA and BCEHS networks to access these links].
- For site-specific questions, please check in with your manager or clinical leadership.
- For trusted information from around the world, please check the [World Health Organization](#) website.

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