

From: [PHSA Communications](#)
To: [PHSA Communications](#)
Subject: All-staff bulletin: The latest COVID-19 information - March 15 at 6:30 p.m.
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2020 6:34:27 PM



All-staff bulletin

The latest COVID-19 information: March 15 at 6:30 p.m.

Sent on behalf of Dr. Maureen O'Donnell & Susan Wannamaker

Chief medical officer and chief operating officer of PHSA's COVID-19 EOC

The information around COVID-19 – and how it impacts our workforce – is changing on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis. We have activated a PHSA-wide emergency operations centre (EOC) and we are moving swiftly to respond. To our entire workforce, **thank you** for continuing to keep yourselves informed, following trusted channels of information and paying close attention to staff bulletins and updates.

Now, more than ever, we have a critically important job to do and we must continue to work together across PHSA to make this happen.

This means prioritizing the work required for management of COVID-19 as we continue to deliver care to patients and families across the province, while ensuring we do not have unintended health consequences for the patients who need our specialized care.

We will do this by re-evaluating the situation on a daily basis and acting in a focused, coordinated and measured manner, making decisions based on data, best practice and through communication with our health authority partners and the Ministry of Health. We are in regular communication with these partners so that no one region or health authority becomes overwhelmed. We are all in this together.

Hot topics covered in this bulletin:

1. New testing criteria
2. Self-isolation for health care workers
3. Working from home
4. Regular & reliable communication

1. New testing criteria

- Testing is available for all patients in B.C. who need it – those with compatible symptoms and risk of exposure – but **not everyone requires a test.**
- B.C. is continuing to test those who are part of an active investigation or outbreak cluster, those with severe illness who are hospitalized, residents of long-term care facilities and health care workers.
- Apart from those mentioned above, if an individual has no symptoms, mild symptoms, or is a returning traveller and isolating at home, **they do not require a test.**
- If, as a health care worker or physician, advice is needed, consult your regional or provincial microbiologist or regional Medical Health Officer.
- More information can be found [here on BCCDC's website](#).

2. Updated requirements on self-isolation for health care workers

- As noted in the all-staff bulletin late on Friday evening, the PHO criteria around self-isolation following out-of-country travel has changed to permit health care workers to return to work.
- As of today (March 15, 2020), the PHO has updated language around this advice as follows:
 - We are asking health care workers who return from travel outside Canada and are *not essential to the delivery of patient care* to self-isolate at home for 14 days.

- Health care workers who return from travel and *are essential to the delivery of patient care* may return to work – unless they have travelled to Hubei province in China, Italy or Iran – but should take additional precautions to reduce the risk to their patients, colleagues, and the public should they become symptomatic. These additional precautions include:
 - Self-monitor daily for signs and symptoms of illness;
 - Wear a surgical mask at all times and in all areas of your workplace;
 - Follow infection prevention and control protocols including diligent hand hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment when delivering patient care;
 - Reduce close contact with other health care workers and avoid shared spaces where possible;
 - Avoid close contact with others when travelling to and from work and between shifts; and
 - Self-isolate at home on days when not required at their workplace.
 - If any health care workers become symptomatic, they should self-isolate and contact their health care provider or 8-1-1 to arrange for assessment. If they develop symptoms while providing care, they should immediately put a mask, finish any essential services they are providing and self-isolate.
- At this time, it is the position of PHSa that ALL employees and physicians are essential to the delivery of patient care and facilitation of the provincial health system. We are actively working on a more precise assessment of this and will provide updated advice as soon as possible.

3. Working from home

- It must be noted that working from home is a separate issue from people needing to potentially self-isolate following international travel.
- Earlier today, the federal government issued broad advice about encouraging Canadians to work from home as much as possible.
- At this point in time, PHSa is not universally directing staff to work from home.
- Advice to work from home will be given on a case-by-case basis and must consider a variety of factors including the ability to perform work duties, the dependent relationship of direct and indirect patient care roles, and our IT system's overall capacity to support remote access. That said, we are actively exploring way to increase the system's capacity across all health authorities.
- In the meantime, so long as you are healthy, have not recently travelled to Hubei province in China, Italy or Iran, and have not been advised otherwise by your leader or manager, you should continue to report to work as usual.
- The safety and wellbeing of our employees and physicians is essential, and we must balance this with the need to have a workforce in place to support the overall demand for patient care.
- We expect that we will be updating you on this issue again tomorrow.

4. Regular and reliable communications channels

We will be increasing the frequency of PHSa communications related to COVID-19:

- **Daily all-staff bulletins (each afternoon).** Rely on these for daily email updates related to our operations and hot topics.
- **Daily news summary (each evening).** Rely on these for trusted news coming out of the PHO's daily briefings. Due to the late timing of these briefings, employees may wish to check their inboxes in the evening.
- **Virtual town halls (every Thursday).** Hear answers to your FAQs from subject matter experts and leaders. Due to our network capacity, there are limited connections available. Attendance will be first come, first served, but the recording will be posted online immediately after.
- **Ongoing updates to POD and phsa.ca.** We will begin replicating the information in the existing [coronavirus resource section on POD](#) on our main website (www.phsa.ca), so that employees can easily access the latest FAQs from outside of the PHSa network.
- **Regular questions through Slido (ongoing).** [Our Slido question page](#) will remain open throughout the week under the event code #PHSATownHall. 'Like' questions that are similar to yours to help us prioritize. Not all questions will be answered directly on Slido, but they will help

inform the communications channels listed above.

Thank you for your continued dedication

We thank you for your continued dedication to the patients and families we serve and for the support you give to our provincial systems essential to delivering services.

As our CEO, Benoit Morin, said during [the town hall on March 13](#):

"We have a job to do, and it will require that we bring our best to work. It will test our capacity to demonstrate courage in the face of challenges, to show compassion and resilience. And first and foremost, it will test our capacity to remain calm and focused. Because when we are calm and focused, we can bring our best to work."

Your ongoing sources of information

- We are sending daily updates to PHSA staff. Watch for emails from phsacomm@phsa.ca.
- Continue to check the [BCCDC's website](#) as a trusted source of information.
- 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].
- We are working on a health professionals section on www.phsa.ca so that employees can access the information off the networks. Stay tuned for more information.
- 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](#).

Respect people

Be compassionate

Dare to innovate

Cultivate partnerships

Serve with purpose