



April 3, 2020

## Health Care Provider Alert: COVID-19 Update

**\*\*New Testing and Clearance Guidance from the Ministry of Health have been issued and is [attached to this communication](#)\*\***

### Epidemiology

Decisions to test a patient should consider local swab supply.

Testing for COVID-19 should be based on clinical assessment. Asymptomatic patients are recommended NOT to be tested, unless it is in follow-up to a previous positive test to clear them from self-isolation. This is required for health care workers or hospitalized patients.

At this time, the province is testing all specimens that are submitted. However, where there are shortages of testing supplies, the following groups **should be prioritized** for testing to inform public health and clinical management for these individuals:

- Symptomatic health care workers (regardless of care delivery setting) and staff who work in health care facilities
- Symptomatic residents and staff of long-term care facilities, retirement homes and other institutional settings (e.g. homeless shelter)
- Hospitalized patients-admitted with respiratory symptoms (new or exacerbated)
- Symptomatic members of remote, isolated, rural and/or Indigenous communities

### Specimen Collection Details

As outlined by [Public Health Ontario](#), the laboratory will accept other swab types (**except cotton-tipped swabs**) and other liquid transport media (**except gel or solid media**) for COVID-19 testing; however, if the submitted swab and/or media type were not validated at PHO Laboratory for COVID-19 testing, the results will be reported with a disclaimer. The following specimen collection kits can be used for nasal or nasopharyngeal specimens:

- Virus Respiratory Kit order: #390082
- Virus Culture Kit order: #390081
- *Chlamydia trachomatis* Culture - Female Kit order #: 390083
- *Chlamydia trachomatis* Culture - Male Kit order #: 390084
- *Mycoplasma pneumoniae/Chlamydophila pneumoniae* PCR Kit order #: 390085
- Roche PCR Media Uniswab Kit order #: 300295
- Bordetella pertussis BP Kit order #: 390052

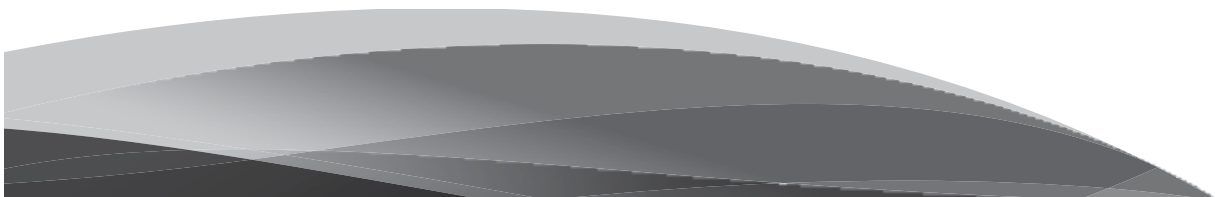


**Health Care Worker (HCW) Recommendations for  
Testing/Quarantine/Self-isolation/Recovery:  
Note that quarantine = self-isolation while asymptomatic**

*Health Care Workers should be connected with the occupational health staff or department of their agency when making decisions*

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<b>HCW with No International Travel or No Exposures</b>	Asymptomatic	No quarantine required.
	Symptomatic with no lab test	Should be tested as soon as possible. If no testing is done: 1. Self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b> 2. Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution. May then return to work with appropriate PPE until 14 days from symptom onset; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.
	Symptomatic with positive lab test for COVID-19	1. Self-isolation until 2 negative swabs, (clearance swabs), obtained 24 hours apart <b>OR</b> 2. If deemed critical for operations, may return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution; AND continue to use PPE until 2 negative swabs obtained 24 hours apart (if no longer doing clearance swabs, continue until 14 days from symptom onset); AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.
	Symptomatic with negative lab test for COVID-19	Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution.

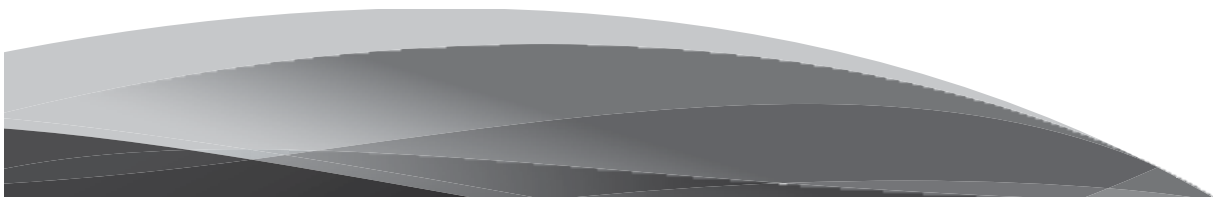




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<b>HCW with International Travel</b>	Asymptomatic • non critical employee	14 days of quarantine since arrival in Canada.
	Asymptomatic • critical employee <sup>^</sup>	14 days of quarantine preferred but can work if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular screening</li> <li>• Use of PPE for 14 days</li> <li>• Active self-monitoring</li> <li>• Immediately self-isolate if symptoms develop; AND report to Occupational Health</li> </ul>
	Symptomatic with no lab testing	Should be tested as soon as possible.  If no testing is done: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b></li> <li>2. Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution. May then return to work with appropriate PPE until 14 days from symptom onset; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.</li> </ol>
	Symptomatic with positive lab test for COVID-19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-isolation until 2 negative swabs, obtained 24 hours apart <b>OR</b></li> <li>2. If deemed critical for operations may return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution; AND continue to use PPE until 2 negative swabs obtained 24 hours apart AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.</li> </ol>
	Symptomatic with negative lab test for COVID-19	Continue self-isolation until 14 days since arrival in Canada.  If deemed critical <sup>^</sup> , return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution with PPE until 14 days since arrival in Canada; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days since arrival in Canada.

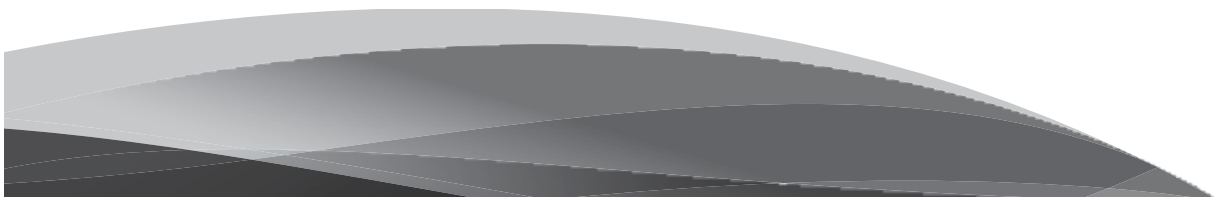




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<b>HCW with High-risk Exposure* to Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 Case</b>	Asymptomatic	14 days of quarantine since last exposure to case. If deemed critical <sup>^</sup> , can return to work with appropriate PPE and self-monitoring; AND outside of work, continue quarantine until 14 day quarantine is complete.
	Symptomatic with no lab test	Should be tested as soon as possible.  If no testing is done: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset <b>OR</b></li> <li>2. Self-isolation until 24 hours after symptom resolution. May then return to work with appropriate PPE until 14 days from symptom onset; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.</li> </ol>
	Symptomatic with positive lab test for COVID-19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Self-isolation until 2 negative swabs, obtained 24 hours apart <b>OR</b></li> <li>4. If deemed critical for operations may return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution; AND continue to use PPE until 2 negative swabs obtained 24 hours apart AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset.</li> </ol>
	Symptomatic with negative lab test	Complete 14 days of self-isolation since last exposure.  If deemed critical <sup>^</sup> , return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution with PPE until 14 days of self-isolation since last exposure is complete; AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days since last exposure.





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**For a HCW who tested positive while asymptomatic, and was tested outside of the above recommendations, they can return to work immediately; AND continue with appropriate PPE at work until 2 negative AND outside of work, continue self-isolation until 14 days from day of testing.**

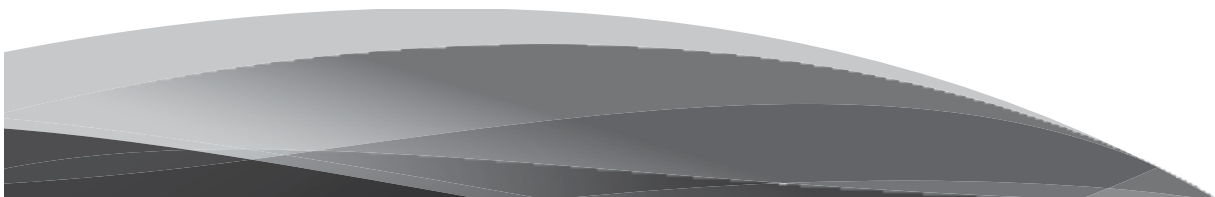
^ critical employee: deemed critical, by employer

^^ asymptomatic = resolution of symptoms that are reasonably likely to be attributed to active COVID-19 infection (e.g. a post-viral cough may persist)

\* high-risk exposure = provided direct care to confirmed case without consistent use of appropriate PPE or household contact of a confirmed case

References:

1. Public health management of cases and contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario (version 6.0)
2. Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health Memo RE: Managing Health Worker Illness and Return to Work COVID-19



Ministry of Health

## COVID-19 Quick Reference Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance

This information can be used to help guide decision making on testing and clearance of individuals suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. This information is current as of March 27, 2020 and may be updated as the situation on COVID-19 continues to evolve.

### Who should be tested for COVID-19?

Testing for COVID-19 should be based on clinical assessment, and not based on the case definition.

At this time, there are no criteria for testing and all specimens will be tested if submitted. However, where there are shortages of testing supplies, the following groups should be **prioritized** for testing to inform public health and clinical management for these individuals:

- Symptomatic health care workers (regardless of care delivery setting) and staff who work in health care facilities
- Symptomatic residents and staff in Long Term Care facilities and retirement homes and other institutional settings eg. Homeless shelter (as per outbreak guidance)
- Hospitalized patients admitted with respiratory symptoms (new or exacerbated)
- Symptomatic members of remote, isolated, rural and/or indigenous communities
- Symptomatic travellers identified at a point of entry to Canada

### Management of individuals who have not been tested

- If individual is asymptomatic and has no exposure risk
  - Provide reassurance and information for [Ontario COVID-19 website](#)
- If individual is asymptomatic, but has exposure risk
  - Provide information on [self-monitoring](#) and [self-isolation](#) for **14 days from exposure risk**

## Criteria for when to discharge someone from isolation and consider 'resolved'

For each scenario, isolation after symptom onset should be for the duration specified, and provided that the individual is afebrile and symptoms are improving. Absence of cough is not required for those known to have chronic cough or who are experiencing reactive airways post-infection. Once a case is discharged from isolation, their case status should be updated to 'resolved'.

- For individuals **at home**:
  - 14 days following symptom onset
  - This applies to individuals whether they were confirmed by testing, and individuals who were not tested but have symptoms compatible with COVID-19
  
- For **hospitalized** patients:
  - Isolate in hospital until 2 negative tests, obtained at least 24 hours apart
  - If discharged home within 14 days of symptom onset, follow advice for individuals at home
  
- For **health care workers**:
  - As a best practice, HCWs who have tested positive for COVID-19 should receive 2 negative swabs at least 24 hours apart, however when this is not feasible, the recommendations in the following table should be followed:

Symptoms	Test Result	Recommendation
Yes	Positive	Return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution; AND Continue with appropriate PPE at work until 2 negative tests (if no longer doing clearance swabs, continue until 14 days after symptoms); AND Continue with work-self-isolation for 14 days after symptom onset
Yes	Negative	Return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution
Yes	Not tested	Return to work at 14 days after symptom onset; OR Return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution with appropriate PPE and work self-isolation until 14 days from symptom onset
No	Positive	Return to work immediately; AND Continue with appropriate PPE at work until 2 negative tests (if no longer doing clearance swabs, continue until 14 days after positive test result); AND Continue with work-self-isolation for 14 days after test result