
MEMO

Date: March 10, 2020

To: Health Care Providers –
Physicians & Staff

From: Dr. Brent Roussin,
Chief Provincial Public Health Officer

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System Integration & Quality, Chief Nursing
Officer,
Shared Health

Subject: Test ALL Symptomatic International Travelers for COVID-19

As of March 5, 2020, 97 tests for COVID-19 have been completed in Manitoba. No laboratory-confirmed cases have been identified in the province. Across Canada, more than 60 cases had been confirmed across four provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec) as of March 9, 2020.

Public health officials continue to monitor, gather information, assess risk and recommend evidence-based approaches to health care providers and precautions for returning travelers and all Manitobans.

Recommendations are based on current evidence and are being continuously reviewed and reassessed.

Updated information is available online at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html> and important changes are underlined below. Updated information and resources (e.g., signage, factsheets) for sites and staff are being regularly updated. Please refer to the website for these reference materials.

Recommendations for travelers and contacts of COVID-19 cases:

Test all international travelers who develop respiratory or flu-like symptoms within 14 days of returning to Manitoba for COVID-19.

- **Advise patients to self-isolate while awaiting test results.** Provide patients with information on what to do while waiting for COVID-19 test results and emphasize the importance of adhering to these recommendations: https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/factsheets/coronavirus_waiting.pdf.
- Symptomatic patients with **negative test results** for COVID-19 should remain at home until their symptoms resolve. Symptomatic patients with **positive test results** for COVID-19 will be contacted by Public Health.

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

- travelers returning from the province of Hubei
- travelers returning from Iran
- contacts of a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19
- laboratory workers exposed during work

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

- all asymptomatic 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

COVID-19 Laboratory Testing Information:

- Relevant travel history and symptoms must be included on the accompanying Cadham Provincial Laboratory (CPL) requisition. Fill the requisition completely. The ID, CPL &/or MOH physician on-call does NOT need to be notified.
- All patients considered a COVID-19 person under investigation should be reported same day using the Clinical Notification of Reportable Diseases and Conditions form:
https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/mhsu_0013.pdf
- 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. 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 COVID-19.

Health care providers – including physicians and staff - are reminded to:

- Implement droplet/contact precautions (gown, gloves, procedure/surgical mask and face/eye protection) for ALL patients presenting with respiratory symptoms consistent with respiratory infections. This includes advising patients and accompanying people (even if asymptomatic) to wear a procedure/surgical mask, and place patients who screen positive for COVID-19 in a designated separate waiting area/space (maintain 2-meter separation).
- If a health care facility does NOT have appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) available, reception should screen patients while maintaining a 2-metre separation and if appropriate, refer patient to their local Urgent Care or Emergency Department. Before sending the patient for assessment and/or testing, contact the receiving facility to ensure appropriate space and precautions are taken.
- Make procedure/surgical masks available to symptomatic patients and those who meet the screening criteria. Tissues and alcohol-based hand cleanser should be made available at triage/reception areas and front entrances. Post updated signage instructing patients with symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing) to alert healthcare workers.
- All PPE, including N95 respirators, are to be used according to clinical recommendations. N95 masks are only recommended for aerosol-generating medical procedures (AGMPs). Volume of PPE supplies are being closely monitored and physicians and staff are asked to report any unusual change in loss or volume.

Emergency Response Services staff are reminded to:

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

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