

## COVID-19: Updated Guidance for Physicians and Patients

### Key Points:

- All returning travellers, including from the U.S., are now asked to self-isolate at home for 14 days.
- COVID testing guidance has changed and should be offered only to those for whom the results impact patient management or public health action (see below for details).
- Patients with mild respiratory symptoms *should not be tested*. Instruct them to self-isolate at home for 14 days and seek medical assessment if respiratory symptoms worsen.

### Situation Update:

As you are aware, COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic. In British Columbia, all travellers arriving in the province are now asked to self-isolate for 14 days. Testing is available, but should be offered only to those for whom the test will change patient management (see box below). All others presenting with mild respiratory symptoms should be advised to self-isolate at home for 14 days from initial symptom onset.

Who <i>should</i> be tested for COVID-19?	Who does <i>not</i> need to be tested for Covid-19?
<p>Patients <b>with respiratory symptoms</b> who are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hospitalized, or likely to be hospitalized</li> <li>2. Health Care Workers</li> <li>3. Residents of long term care facilities</li> <li>4. Part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak (this testing will be organized by Public Health)</li> </ol> <p>To prioritize testing <i>label the requisition</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitalized patient (label as <u>HOSP</u>)</li> <li>• Long-term care facility (label as <u>LTCF</u>)</li> <li>• Health Care Worker (label as <u>HCW</u>)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Patients without symptoms</li> <li>2. Patients with mild respiratory symptoms, who can be managed at home. This includes returning travellers with an onset of illness within 14 days of return to Canada.</li> </ol> <p><b>Note that COVID-19 presents as a mild illness in the majority of patients and testing does not change management.</b></p>

**Please advise patients, with or without a history of travel, who have mild respiratory symptoms that can be managed at home, to self-isolate at home for 14 days after the initial onset of their symptoms.**

After 14 days, they can return to their routine activities. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean they need to continue to self-isolate beyond 14 days. Advise patients to seek medical care if respiratory symptoms worsen.

### What about household contacts of a patient who is self-isolating?

People who live in the same household as a patient who is self-isolating *do not need to self-isolate so long as they remain asymptomatic*. These asymptomatic household contacts should self-monitor for the onset of respiratory symptoms.

You can reach a Medical Health Officer at 604.675.3900 Toll free at 1.855.675.3900  
For public health emergencies after hours contact the Medical Health Officer on call at 604.527.4893

#### Vancouver Coastal Health Medical Health Officers

Chief Medical Health Officer: Dr. Patricia Daly

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As much as possible, we are asking asymptomatic household contacts to distance themselves from the patient (e.g. stay in separate rooms, eat separately, sleep in separate beds and use separate bathrooms, if available).

If household contacts develop respiratory symptoms, however mild, they should also self-isolate for 14 days from the time of symptom onset. Advise patients to seek medical care if respiratory symptoms worsen.

**For all patients tested:**

- Offer them a surgical mask and place them in a separate room.
- Please collect a **Nasopharyngeal swab**. Throat swabs are now discouraged.
- When obtaining a swab, ensure that you wear, at a minimum, a surgical mask and eye protection.
- If results are positive, VCH Public Health will be notified immediately and will follow up directly with the patient and any contacts, as appropriate.

*Given the global swab and collection media shortage, use either the routine Copan NP swabs (used for Influenza or other respiratory virus testing), or the skin/mucosal swabs for HSV/VZV viral testing (the containers have a pink liquid in it and a red or blue cap).*



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