2019 Novel Coronavirus – Update # 18

Current situation
As of today, Mar. 23, Nova Scotia has 41 positive cases of COVID-19 in people ranging in age from under 10 to mid-70s. One case remains hospitalized. All are travel-related or connected to an earlier case. Read the news release here. There have been 2,308 negative test results. Testing numbers are updated daily at https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus.


Healthy health care workers including physicians who are travelling for work purposes are exempt from the cross boarder travel restriction, as are Nova Scotians entering or exiting the province for specialized medical treatment.

Health care providers are exempt from the social distancing requirement of two metres and the gathering limit of no more than five people when in the workplace. This includes:

- Nova Scotia Health Authority employees
- IWK Health Centre employees
- Physicians and nurse practitioners
- DHW-funded home support agencies and VON
- Nursing homes
- Residential care facilities

Our response
CEO Message and video
"It has been an incredibly busy and intense few weeks as we continue to plan, prepare and respond to COVID-19. We know how hard our teams are working to maintain essential services and deliver safe and supportive care in a challenging environment. Thank you for the amazing effort we’ve seen across the organization. Everybody has pulled together very quickly." – Brendan Carr, CEO. Read his full message. Also, watch the video Dr. Carr shared last week about the feedback he’s been receiving and the supports that are available for staff and physicians.
Use and availability of personal protective equipment (PPE)
We are receiving lots of questions and concerns about the use and availability of personal protective equipment. We understand your concerns and want to assure you that your health, safety and wellness is, and will continue to be a top priority as we respond to this pandemic.

It is important that we consistently use the right protective equipment in the right situation, and that our teams have confidence that they can get the equipment they need when they need it. We have put a number of processes and protocols in place to protect staff and physicians and are actively working to address your outstanding concerns. An operational and medical co-lead working group are being brought together to identify what equipment is required for various procedures and what are our supply options, as well as providing clear direction on who and when to use it. This is an organizational priority and we will share more details as decisions are made.

Business continuity measures: Information Management / Technology
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NSHA must implement business continuity plans to sustain critical operations supporting patient care. NSHA IM/IT is implementing the following business continuity measures. Please take a few moments to review this information. As the situation evolves, further measures may be necessary. We appreciate your cooperation and patience during this difficult time.

Virtual Care
To help support patient care and health care providers in the current COVID-19 pandemic, Telehealth Zoom has been approved as a virtual care platform for use on an interim basis for all health care providers (physicians, nurse practitioners, allied health professionals and staff). Telehealth Zoom is a secure, web-based virtual care video conferencing platform. For more information, please visit https://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/telehealth-zoom. Questions can be directed to VirtualCare@nshealth.ca.

Use regular process to procure IT equipment.
Staff and physicians in the zones are reminded to use regular procurement processes when procuring IT equipment like tablets instead of reaching out to vendors directly. There are risks associated with contacting vendors directly so all staff and physicians are
reminded to submit all requests for IT equipment via the service desk so the IT team can collect them and ensure solutions put in place are supportable.

**Enhanced teleconference line commands**
For those using Bell’s conferencing service during this time, a variety of commands are available to enhance your teleconference experience. View commands. If you need further information, please see this in-depth guide.

**New/Updated guidance documents**
- **Guidance for providers – Use of Metered Dose Inhalers**
- **Pediatric Order Set**
- **Memo on Secondary Assessment Clinical Pathway** (new case definition)
- **Updated family Practice Screening Guide** (revised: Mar. 23, 2020)
- **Palliative Care Guiding Principles and Resources**

**Home support – Updated links**
NSHA has been working with home support agency representatives to develop a consistent approach to prioritizing home support services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Links to [Home Support Prioritization Protocols](#) and a [Home Support Emergency Response Level (ERL) Guide](#) have been updated. These implementations will mean changes to service levels for some individuals.

**REMINDER: Emergency department surveillance**
All patients seen in the Emergency Departments and/or admitted to hospital with acute respiratory illness will be automatically tested for COVID-19 regardless of travel or exposure history. To facilitate this surveillance the following should occur on all patients seen in the Emergency Department:

1. All patient with respiratory symptoms should be placed on contact and droplet precautions.
2. All patients with influenza-like-illness (cough or fever) should have an NPS for influenza testing.
3. All patients being tested for influenza will be automatically tested for COVID-19 regardless of history of travel or contact with a known or suspect case.
4. Patients who are discharged home from the Emergency Department will be told to self-isolate until contacted by Public Health with their results.
5. For patients requiring admission **ONLY** those who meet the COVID-19 case definition (history of travel outside Nova Scotia within 14 days *and/or* contact with known or suspected COVID-19 case (symptomatic person within the past 14 days, including a symptomatic person who has travelled outside Canada in the past 14 days)) are eligible for COVID-19 unit admission.

6. All other acute respiratory symptom patients requiring admission should be admitted to an appropriate non-COVID-19 ward with contact and droplet precautions.

**REMEMBER: Free parking for staff and physicians**

As announced on Friday in recognition of your commitment to patient care during COVID-19, staff and physicians will not be charged for parking on NSHA sites during the pandemic. As well, we are offering free parking to patients until further notice.

At QEII Health Sciences Centre, some onsite parking will be saved for patients, while the remaining onsite capacity will be for staff. Beyond onsite parking for staff, we have secured 350 additional parking spots nearby which are also free and protected just for our staff. They include:

- NS Natural History Museum (1747 Summer St – only access off of Summer St)
- Citadel High School (1855 Trollope St access off of both Trollope St. and Ahern Ave.)
- Garrison Grounds (1825 Ahern Ave – access off of Ahern)
- College Street Lot (access off of College St)

As well, HRM is waiving parking fees at all of its meters, and suspending the enforcement of hourly and monthly permit parking. There are approximately 300+ spots in close proximity of the QEII and many as well as in Dartmouth for Nova Scotia Hospital and Dartmouth General Hospital staff.

**ICYMI**

Some of our March 22 update was unintentionally cut off for some readers so in case you missed it (ICYMI), here is the missing information from yesterday’s update.
Hearts for health care
To the thousands of health care providers and staff across the province who continue to stand up and show up in the most critical times, thank you. Despite the uncertainty many of us may be feeling, we know no matter the challenge, our teams are working hard to take care of Nova Scotians every day. We've been hearing some truly positive and up-lifting stories these past weeks, and we wanted to take this opportunity to share some of them with you. From NSHA and everyone across the province, thank you for all that you do.

I want to say thank you to all the teams in health care right now. I can't even imagine what you are dealing with, normal is crazy enough but now this? Wishing you all the best, good job everyone! – Facebook user

I salute you front liners 👍👍👍stay safe🙏 – Facebook user

People Services/Human Resources: Employee and Family supports and updated Q&As
The organization is here to support you and, as we move forward, we are committed to responding to the needs of staff. We will work to source resources that meet the evolving needs of our teams in a timely manner, and communicate these resources as soon as they are available.

Being resilient in these challenging times is necessary for everyone. Talent and Organizational Development has brought together a number of resilience resources for you and your colleagues. Additionally, you can find upcoming events, activities and resources here.

Additional COVID-19 questions and answers for employees can be viewed here.

COVID-19 OHSW messages for staff
We’ve updated our COVID-19 occupational health, safety and wellness messages for staff. Please review here.
Mental Health and Addictions
This is an anxious and stressful time for everyone. It’s important to take time for your mental health. Learn more about the many things you can do to help cope with COVID-19.

The Mental Health Provincial Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to anyone experiencing a mental health or addictions crisis or someone concerned about them, by calling 1-888-429-8167 (toll free).

COVID-19 results available in provincial SHARE
As of March 20, COVID-19 results for patients across the province will be available for reference within the patient record in the SHARE system. As well, results are being sent to the primary care provider, if there is one available. Public Health is responsible for the follow up on all COVID-19 results.

Reminder: DIS and SHARE Access Process
With more health care providers treating patients remotely as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic and the need for paperless prescriptions and access to drug profiles, this is a reminder that all user access requests to SHARE and the Drug Information System (DIS) must be submitted through IT Self-Service. This will help users and SHARE coordinators avoid delays due to incomplete forms being submitted. Please note that paper-based forms will no longer be accepted and will be returned to requestors, advising them to re-submit the request using IT Self-Service. We thank you for your support and if you have any questions, please contact your SHARE coordinator or SHARE@novascotia.ca or your local IT Service Desk.

Additional information
As a reminder, staff and physicians can engage a trained interpreter via Language Services to support patients and clients who do not speak English fluently or understand it fully. Visit Language Services for tools and information that will help you determine when and how to access an interpreter.

For up-to-date information, please visit NSHA’s coronavirus intranet page.

Questions can be directed to coronavirus@nshealth.ca.