Coronavirus – Update #21
March 26, 2020

Please print and post/share this update.

Current situation
As of today, March 26, Nova Scotia has 73 positive cases of COVID-19 in people ranging in age from under 10 to mid-70s. Two individuals remain hospitalized. Most are travel-related or connected to an earlier case. One new case cannot currently be linked to travel or an earlier case. An investigation is ongoing to determine the source of the exposure and whether any others may have been exposed. Read the news release here. There have been 3,201 negative test results. Testing numbers are updated daily at https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus.

Dr. Robert Strang, chief medical officer of health for the province recently took part in Question and Answer (Q&A) videos for COVID-19. Here are the links:
Kids Q&A: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwLZ9YtgHtLCS6v8p-PC-hzka4a7O0nqc
General Q&A https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwLZ9YtgHtLBm1odkXZF3BZhMckD8aL

Our response
NSHA prepares for service delivery during COVID-19 pandemic
NSHA continues to plan and prepare at an organizational level, across the province, for service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time it is necessary to consolidate emergency services, optimizing the number and distribution of emergency departments in Nova Scotia. NSHA is modifying the roles of collaborative emergency centres in Cumberland County to better align available resources with care needs. Beginning Friday, March 27 at 8 a.m.:

- All Saints Springhill Hospital’s emergency department will become an urgent care treatment centre, open from 7 a.m to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

- North Cumberland Memorial Hospital in Pugwash will serve as an urgent treatment centre, open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week, and continue to operate as a collaborative emergency centre overnight.

- South Cumberland Community Care Centre in Parrsboro will transition to a family medicine/general practice clinic, providing daytime primary care services. It will not provide emergency care overnight.

Regional hospitals in Amherst, Truro and New Glasgow provide emergency care 24/7. Read more.
Temporary closure of women’s and children’s unit at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre

The inpatient women’s and children’s unit at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre in Amherst is temporarily closed, including for any planned deliveries, until further notice. Pregnancy and delivery care will be provided in Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Truro or the Moncton Hospital in Moncton, New Brunswick depending on the patients’ home location. In the event of an emergency or unplanned delivery, there will be family physician, obstetrician and nursing staff available in Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre to support pregnancy care. Prenatal care will continue to be provided by the hospital’s team. This closure allows for the redeployment of the staff and physician to other work.

Independent offers of /solicitation for donations of PPE

NSHA has been approached by a number of individuals and groups interested in donating items or equipment during the pandemic, including personal protective equipment (PPE). Although we have enough PPE to meet the current need, NSHA is following up on offers for N95 respirators to help boost our stockpile for the coming weeks and months, when we expect to see a surge in cases. The organization is also working to source additional PPE using a streamlined approach. NSHA is keeping a list of offers received for reference and possible follow-up if/as appropriate. Staff are asked NOT to solicit donations of PPE from individuals or groups – it’s important that any efforts to source additional PPE be coordinated. If you receive unsolicited offers of N95 respirators, please forward these to PPEOffer@nshealth.ca.

In the news

Chelsea Fraser, registered nurse and Dr. Mark Walsh, surgeon at the QEII appeared on the First at Five segment of CTV Atlantic’s Live at 5 to talk about the important message behind this photo that recently circulated on social media, “We stay here for you, please stay home for us.” Watch the story here.

Visitor restrictions – general information and information pertaining to cancer patients

Just a reminder that visitor restrictions are in place at all NSHA facilities to limit the spread of respiratory illness, including COVID-19. Cancer Care has also implemented a visitor/companion policy. Read more.

Finance creates new email for COVID-19 related finance questions

NSHA Finance has created a new email address (Covid.Finance@nshealth.ca) if you have any COVID-19 related questions for any Finance group. The email will be monitored regularly and we will provide prompt responses.
Point of care testing for COVID-19
We are aware that vendors are reaching out to various stakeholders regarding the availability of new point of care testing to perform COVID-19 antibody testing. At this time, any point of care testing for COVID-19 antibodies is prohibited unless approved by NSHA. There are concerns about the lack of information on the performance characteristics of the new testing, particularly with regard to the sensitivity to detect infection compared to the robust gold standard molecular based testing being performed in the NSHA QEII Virology Laboratory. Also of concern is any deviation from the current process of seamless reporting through the Laboratory Information System to ensure health care providers and Public Health officials are able to monitor and follow up on COVID-19 suspect and positive cases. This is critical to supporting efforts to contain and control the spread of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia.

These technologies are being evaluated by provincial partners across the country and we will continue to monitor the evolution of this technology and look for future opportunities to incorporate new and innovative ways to respond to the pandemic. If you receive offers from vendors, please reach out to your local laboratory for more information and advice.

Patient lists and privacy
If your site is utilizing printed patient lists for screening at site entrances, please remember that these lists, although containing limited personal health information (PHI), are still considered PHI and must be protected at all times. Please ensure these are securely shredded when no longer required.

We also want to remind everyone that accessing systems containing patient lists are for managing patient care and services ONLY. Even information which is limited to name and room number is still considered personal health information (PHI). Snooping is not now, and never will be tolerated at NSHA.

Any potential breaches that Privacy discovers via auditing, or those which are reported will be investigated. Any confirmed snooping breaches may be subject to disciplinary action. Privacy recognizes the need for everyone to keep up-to-date on the rapidly developing COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that, especially for those of you providing direct patient care, that this is a difficult time. We applaud and thank you for your hard work on behalf of our patients and thank you for helping us to protect patient privacy.

New/Updated guidance documents and resources
- COVID-19 Family Practice Screening Guide (updated: March 26, 2020)
- Perioperative and Interventional Radiology Services during COVID-19 (March 26, 2020)
- Central Zone – Lab Requisition – Acute Care & EDs_COVID-19 (March 26, 2020)
- Eastern Zone – Lab Requisition – Acute Care & EDs_COVID-19 (March 26, 2020)
- Northern Zone – Lab Requisition – Acute Care & EDs_COVID-19 (March 26, 2020)
- Western Zone – Lab Requisition – Acute Care & EDs_COVID-19 (March 26, 2020)
- COVID-19 Requisition for Corrections (updated: March 26, 2020)
- COVID-19 Assessment clinic cost centres (updated: March 26, 2020)

Occupational Health/People Services
Updated – Occupational health information and guidelines for staff
Here is today’s Occupational Health information and guidelines for NSHA healthcare workers.
Employee and Family Supports
It is increasingly important to ensure our staff feel supported as we all work together during this pandemic. These are unprecedented times and we will continue to provide our team members with access to information and supports to better navigate this uncertainty. Resources to assist in your financial well-being and a reminder of information and supports in the areas of resilience, psychological wellness and coaching and conflict competence may be found here.

REMINDER: Upcoming facilitated health and well-being opportunities through EFAP provider
The emotional health and well-being of employees as we move through the coming days and weeks is extremely important to NSHA. We have arranged with our employee and family assistance program (EFAP) provider to provide two facilitated opportunities per day, to log onto ZOOM in a group format, and discuss techniques and strategies that will help navigate these uncertain times.

The first sessions will be Friday, March 27 at 10 a.m. and 9 p.m.
To join:
Morning session 10 a.m.
Recurring meeting every week day at 10 a.m. beginning Friday, March 27 - Join Zoom Meeting
https://lwatmorneaushepell.zoom.us/j/595167030 - Meeting ID: 595 167 030

Evening session 9 p.m.
Recurring meeting every week day at 9 p.m. beginning Friday, March 27 – Join Zoom Meeting
https://lwatmorneaushepell.zoom.us/j/468482275 - Meeting ID: 468 482 275

IM/IT
IM/IT continues to work on options for working remotely
NSHA IM/IT is working on providing options to enable NSHA staff to work remotely. There are a number of items that are needed to work remotely, including, but not limited to the following:

- Laptop/desktop
- WiFi or network cable
- Global Protect software
- High speed internet (required and provided by the employee)

To request items or to report that you will be taking your device home, please ask your director to complete the NSHA Remote Request Form on behalf of your team. This will assist IT in responding and prioritizing these requests more quickly. If you have an NSHA device (desktop computer/laptop) and are able to set up your device to work remotely by following the IM/IT Working Remotely and Global Protect documentation below, please do so.

- Global Protect Installation Quick Reference Guide – Desktop Computer
- Global Protect Installation Quick Reference Guide – Laptop Computer
- Take Computer Home General Instructions
- NSHA Remote Work Dos and Don’t

More information and frequently asked questions (FAQs)
New to working remotely? Attend Open Q&A session with IT

During this unprecedented time, we understand that many of you are now working from home. To help you with a smooth transition to working remotely, the IM/IT Business Productivity team is offering special OFFICE Hours sessions every Monday and Thursday from now until the end of April 2020 from 2 to 3 p.m.

Click here to Join Skype Meeting on any of the following dates:

- March 30
- April 2
- April 6
- April 9
- April 16
- April 20
- April 23
- April 27
- April 30

Note: There will be no session on April 13 (holiday).

Visit our Working Remotely page for related documentation. Please share this information with colleagues who might benefit from this as well.

Hearts for health care

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.

“Thanks for staying on the job to help deal with this epidemic. We know you are all taking personal risk to do so, and it is a great tribute to your dedication. THANK YOU!!”

“Thank you for your efforts! Stay safe.”

“May you be safe! Thank you for your courage in having chosen this remarkable helping profession called medicine--in all its forms--and showing it again, now, for facing the possibility of serious illness in order to help others. I honour you.”

Links/contacts

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

Questions can be directed to coronavirus@nshealth.ca.