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**Date:** February 24, 2020

**To:** Health care providers

**From:** Dr. Brent Roussin Chief Provincial Public Health Officer  
Lanette Siragusa, Provincial Lead, Health System Integration & Quality, Chief Nursing Officer, Shared Health

**Subject: COVID-19 UPDATE – REMINDER TO CHECK TRAVEL HISTORY FOR SYMPTOMATIC PATIENTS**

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As of February 20, 2020, 23 tests for COVID-19 have been completed in Manitoba. No laboratory-confirmed cases have been identified in the province and the overall risk to Canadians remains low.

Public health officials continue to monitor, gather information, assess risk and recommend evidence-based approaches for health care providers and precautions for returning travelers. Recommendations are based on current evidence and are being continuously reviewed and reassessed.

**Any changes in recommended approach will be communicated to you.**

## **Reminder to Check Travel History for Symptomatic Patients**

The number of cases of COVID-19 is increasing outside China. Public health officials are monitoring regions of concern and health care providers are encouraged to refer to <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html> for most up-to-date information.

Patients who are presenting with symptoms of cold or flu who have **travelled internationally** OR who have had close contact with someone who has flu-like symptoms and who has travelled internationally should be identified.

Providers are asked to obtain a detailed travel history for symptomatic patients, including locations visited and timelines of travel for 14 days prior to onset of illness.

Providers are further asked to cross-reference international travel history of symptomatic patients with up-to-date regions of concern prior to contacting Infectious Disease to determine if COVID-19 testing is required.

## **Health care providers are reminded to:**

Implement Droplet/Contact Precautions

- In cases of ALL patients presenting with respiratory symptoms consistent with respiratory infections, staff should implement droplet/contact precautions.
- Symptomatic patients and accompanying people (even if asymptomatic) should wear a procedure or surgical mask.
- Place patients who screen positive in a designated separate waiting area or space

(maintain 2-metre separation), and immediately:

- Do not allow patient to cohort with other patients and limit visitors to only those who are essential.
- Notify IP&C/designate and Infectious Diseases (ID) on-call at 204-787-2071. Based on clinical presentation and epidemiology ID will notify the Medical Officer of Health (204-788-8666) and Cadham Provincial Laboratory (CPL) physician on-call (204-787-2071) to assure appropriate investigations and precautions. Nasopharyngeal specimens should be placed in viral transport and shipped category B to CPL promptly. The specimens must be submitted with Suspect COVID-19, relevant travel history and relevant symptoms on the accompanying requisition.
- Screen accompanying individuals for symptoms of acute respiratory infection. If individuals are sent home pending results, they should be advised to self-isolate until their results are known.

#### Implement Enhanced Droplet/Contact Precautions

- If a patient is deemed a suspect for COVID-19 based on the above or other clinical criteria, health care providers should implement enhanced droplet and contact precautions.
- This includes gown, gloves, procedure or surgical mask and face/eye protection. For aerosol-generating medical procedures (AGMPs), an N95 respirator is required instead of a procedure or surgical mask. These measures are based on current evidence which has shown them to be effective.

At this time, broader use of N95 respirator is not recommended or required however health care providers are encouraged to review proper donning and doffing procedures for personal protective equipment.

Supply Chain is actively engaged in Manitoba's COVID-19 Incident Management and response and are monitoring stock and supplies

#### **Health care facilities should continue to:**

- Make procedure or surgical masks, tissues and alcohol based hand cleanser available at triage/reception areas and front entrances, AND
- Post updated signage (updated February 18, 2020) at entrances and triage/reception areas instructing patients with symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose, malaise, headache) to alert healthcare workers. <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/health-providers/coronavirus-resources/>

#### **Emergency Response Services Staff are reminded to:**

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

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