

Memo

To:

From: Kieran Moore, Medical Officer of Health

Date: March 16, 2020

Re: COVID-19: Important Updates

As the outbreak of COVID-19 continues to evolve globally and within Canada and Ontario. I am asking the KFL&A community to immediately take a number of enhanced measures over the coming weeks to protect themselves from COVID-19 and to help mitigate its spread in our area.

1. Recommending Social Distancing

Social distancing is a public health strategy that limits the closeness and interactions of people so disease spreads less. **Social distancing involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with.** This will help to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Social distancing includes, but is not limited to:

- Talk to your supervisor, manager, or employer about the possibility of working from home where possible.
- Avoiding visits to Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Supportive Housing, Hospices and other congregate care settings unless the visit is absolutely essential.
- Avoiding non-essential trips in the community.
- If you have to go into the community for an essential trip via taxi or rideshare, be sure to keep the windows down.
- If possible, limit or consider cancelling group gatherings.
- If you have meetings planned, consider doing them virtually instead of in person.
- Whenever possible, spend time outside and in settings where people can maintain a 1 to 2 metre (3 to 6 feet) distance from each other.

In KFL&A, we are asking that you do a risk assessment of any gatherings to consider the age of participants, type of activities, number of people, duration of activity, and our local community COVID-19 activity. We don't want any planned event to increase the risk of local transmissions.

2. Closure of Licensed Childcare Centres, Before and After School Programs, March Break camps, and Public Facilities

Effective immediately, KFL&A Public Health is recommending the closure of licensed childcare centres, before and after school programs, March break camps and public facilities within the KFL&A area, at least until April 5, 2020.

It is especially important to take this proactive approach and close these sites now, as children propagate transmission back to adults and elderly, have low level symptoms, and probably shed the virus for a longer period of time.

3. Returning Travellers Advised to Self-Isolate for 14 days

Effective immediately, KFL&A Public Health is **advising all individuals who are returning from any travel outside of Canada to self-isolate for 14 days and to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19**. This recommendation is retroactive for any individuals that have returned from travel outside of Canada (e.g., if you returned 7 days ago, you would self-isolate for the next 7 days). This advisory is being put in place in order to reduce potential exposure to the community if an individual develops COVID-19 illness.

4. COVID-19 Assessment Centre

A community based COVID-19 Assessment Centre is now open at Hotel Dieu Hospital (HDH) site of Kingston Health Sciences Centre. The COVID-19 Assessment Centre is set up to assess returning travellers, as well as community residents, who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.

The COVID-19 Assessment Centre will operate 7 days a week between the hours of 1:00 to 8:00 p.m. Patients will enter HDH by a separate, well-marked entrance directly across from the Chown Memorial Parking Garage. Large signage will direct people to the correct door, which is just west of the main entrance.

5. Criteria for Laboratory Testing

Guidance on who requires testing for COVID-19 is quickly evolving. Currently, KFL&A Public Health recommends testing individuals who have symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (fever, new cough, or difficulty breathing) AND they meet at least one of the following:

- Returning from travel outside of Canada within 14 days prior to their illness onset, OR
- Returning from an area in Canada with established local transmission within 14 days prior to their illness onset, OR
- A close contact of a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

A close contact is defined as:

- A person who provided care for the patient, including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers, or who had other similar close physical contact OR
- A person who lived with or otherwise had close prolonged contact with a probable or confirmed case while the case was symptomatic.

Testing for COVID-19 is NOT recommended if a person has no symptoms, regardless of their travel or exposure history.

KFL&A Public Health also recommends COVID-19 testing of the following individuals, regardless of exposure or travel history:

- Health care workers with acute respiratory illness, including mild illness
- Individuals admitted to hospital with acute respiratory illness
- Individuals with acute respiratory illness who reside in long-term care homes and retirement homes

- Individuals with acute respiratory illness who reside in other institutions as directed by KFL&A Public Health
- Health care workers as part of a health care institutional outbreaks and as directed by KFL&A Public Health
- First Nation Community members living on-reserve with acute respiratory illness

6. Instructions for Patients

KFL&A Public Health is now recommending the following instructions be provided to patients:

- **Those with any travel outside of Canada (including the USA):** Self-isolation for 14 days from the date of return to Canada, even if asymptomatic.
- **Those with mild/moderate symptoms compatible with COVID-19, regardless of travel history:** who can manage symptoms reasonably at home should NOT call KFL&A Public Health and they should self-isolate until 24 hours AFTER symptoms have FULLY resolved.
- **Those with moderate but escalating symptoms compatible with COVID-19 AND have either travelled outside of Canada or been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days:**
 - Do NOT call KFL&A Public Health
 - Children under 6 months of age should be taken to the COVID-19 Assessment Centre or go to the hospital emergency department
 - Visit the COVID-19 Assessment Centre or call your health care provider (if available). If neither are available, go to the hospital emergency department and pay attention to special signage.
- **Those with severe symptoms compatible with COVID-19, regardless of travel history:** should seek emergency medical care and identify any COVID-19 concerns immediately so appropriate personal protective equipment can be used.
- **Confirmed case of COVID-19:** Self-isolation until symptoms have completely resolved for 24 hours and there have been two negative tests for COVID-19, which are 24 hours apart.
- **Close contact of a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19:** Self-isolation for 14 days after last contact with the confirmed case. Close contact is someone you live with, provide care for, or spent extensive time with.
- **Close contact with a traveller returning from outside Canada who has symptoms compatible with COVID-19 that started within 14 days of their return:** Self-Isolation for 14 days after last contact with suspected case.

7. Assessing Patients

- Health care providers can help decrease the burden on the emergency department and the assessment centre by providing COVID-19 assessments of their own patients, in person only if you have the required IPAC supplies and processes.
- The Ministry of Health has approved new physician billing codes for telephone assessments (K080, K081, K082, and K083). Please refer to the Ministry website for more information on the requirements for these billing codes.
- The Ministry of Health has published an [online self-assessment tool](#) for patients.

8. Personal Protective Equipment

- The Ministry of Health has issued a directive that droplet and contact precautions should be used for clinical encounters with suspected COVID-19 patients, including testing.
- Airborne precautions, including the use of N95 respirators, are only required for aerosolgenerating medical procedures.
- Please see Public Health Ontario's COVID-19 [IPAC Recommendations](#) for more details.

9. Mental Health is an important part of your overall health.

Here are a few things you can do to support yourself:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. When you are gathering information, use credible resources such as the CDC, PHAC, or WHO or kflapa.ca.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Support others in your community. Check in on people who might be at higher risk. Show compassion.

10. Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

Take these measures to stay healthy and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Clean your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cough and sneeze into the bend of your arm, or a tissue and not into your hand.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes with your hands.
- Clean objects and surfaces that a lot of people touch, such as doorknobs, phones, and television remotes with regular household cleaner.
- Practice social distancing and avoid large crowds. Reduce physical contact with others to break the pathways COVID-19 uses to move between people, such as shaking hands and direct contact.
- Get your influenza vaccine.
- Stay home when you are sick and avoid contact with other people until your symptoms are gone.
- Do not share personal items that come into contact with saliva such as toothbrushes, eating utensils drinks, water bottles, and towels
- Avoid large crowds because COVID-19 is spread from person to person through close contact with others.