

Important Hospital Sector Updates Regarding COVID-19

Acute Care Guidance, Visitors and COVID-19 Surveillance in Hospitals

Update to York Region hospitals as of March 20, 2020

UPDATED ACUTE CARE GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Late on March 19, 2020, Ontario's Ministry of Health (the Ministry) provided an update to public health units that guidance for the acute care sector has been updated. Links to the updated guidance documents are available on york.ca/healthprofessionals as well as:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_acute_care_guidance.pdf

RESTRICTING VISITORS IN ACUTE CARE SETTINGS

The Ministry is committed to maintaining the safety of vulnerable patients in acute care settings. The Chief Medical Officer of Health is recommending that acute care settings only allow essential visitors until further notice. **Essential visitors** are:

- A visitor or person accompanying a patient who is dying or very ill
- A parent/guardian of an ill child or youth
- A visitor or person accompanying a patient undergoing surgery or a woman giving birth

These essential visitors must be actively screened in these settings. Screening questions should include: asking visitors about their symptoms; recent travel history outside of Canada and close contact with a case of COVID-19 or close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness and recent travel outside of Canada.

Individuals who fail screening will not be permitted to enter. No other visitors should be permitted to enter these premises and should be encouraged to keep in touch with loved ones by phone or other technologies.

COVID-19 SURVEILLANCE IN HOSPITALS

The Ministry and York Region Public Health are requesting hospitals and emergency departments to ensure the proper use of and/or adopt (where that hasn't occurred) the Acute Care Enhanced Surveillance (ACES) system and the electronic Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (eCTAS) application in your hospital as soon as possible to support enhanced surveillance as part of the provincial COVID-19 response effort.

Improving the monitoring of emergency department visits for symptoms and complications related to COVID-19 will assist to identify critical signals about the emerging COVID-19 situation in York Region.

The following key words should be added in triage/admission notes when COVID-19 is suspected:

- Consistently used the key word "suspected COVID". This is the text string that the system will use to capture these presentations. This verbiage can appear anywhere within the complaint field, but requires a space between the words.
- Information detailing symptoms (e.g., acute respiratory illness or ARI, pneumonia, cough, fever), recent travel (travel to "specific country") and potential contact with other cases (contact with



COVID case) would also benefit surveillance

- Complaints can be entered in upper or lower case characters
- For hospitals using eCTAS system follow the above guidelines when filling out the “subjective assessment notes” box during triage
- **Examples:** “Acute respiratory illness with suspected covid china”; “suspected covid pneumonia”; “SUSPECTED COVID COUGH + FEVER UPON RETURN FROM IRAN”

The attached Technical Document provides further details.

For further resources regarding COVID-19 and the enhanced surveillance available through ACES, see www.kflaphi.ca/covid. If you have questions regarding the technical aspects of this change, please contact Dr. Paul Belanger at paul.belanger@klphai.ca or 613-549-1121 ext. 1602.

UPDATED SECTION ON OUR WEBSITE – YORK.CA/COVID19

We want to let you know about a new section on our public facing website (york.ca/covid19), the analytics section. Here you can find a breakdown of cases in York Region and get a sense of those that are hospitalized or self-isolating in the community and where laboratory confirmed cases in York Region are thought to have acquired COVID-19 (e.g., travel, close contact with a case, community, etc...). There are also links to Ontario and Canada’s surveillance information.