

March 15, 2020

## 2019 Novel Coronavirus – Update # 11

*To all staff and physicians*

### **Current situation**

Nova Scotia Government held a press conference regarding three presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia and additional measures to support virus containment.

[Full release is available here.](#) Highlights include:

- Nova Scotia announced the province's first three presumptive cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), today, March 15. The province is also taking further measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- The cases are not connected and are travel related. The individuals followed all the proper procedures when they started to feel unwell.
- Two individuals are in the Halifax Regional Municipality and one is in Kings County. All three are managing their symptoms at home in self-isolation.
- Public health has been in contact with these individuals and those who have come in close contact with them are also being directed to self-isolate at home, away from the public, for 14 days.

Additional prevention measures for Nova Scotians are in effect immediately under the authority of the Health Protection Act and include:

- long-term care facilities closed to visitors effectively immediately
- public schools closed for two weeks following March Break (weeks of March 23 and March 30) and then will be reassessed
- regulated child care centres closed March 17 to April 3 and then will be reassessed
- March break camps cancelled
- casinos in Halifax and Sydney are closed as of 12 am March 16 and bar owners can no longer operating VLTs
- anyone who travelled outside of Canada must self-isolate even if symptom-free
- organizations and businesses must practice social distancing of two metres or six feet and keep gatherings below 150 or much smaller if possible. This applies to restaurants, bars, movie theatres and other gathering spots.

## Our response

### Personal Protective Equipment

The current evidence suggests the virus causing COVID-19 is transmitted by droplets similar to influenza. Contact and droplet precautions including a surgical mask with eye protection, gloves and a gown are the PPE that will protect our workforce. N95 masks are only required when doing aerosol generating medical procedures, such as intubation.

The proper donning and doffing of personal protective equipment (PPE) is almost as important as the equipment itself. Refer to this video for PPE information and demonstration: [Donning and doffing instructions: PPE used for droplet and contact precautions](#). Also the [coronavirus intranet](#) – Infection Prevention and Control section has additional materials to support your PPE use.

### Assessment Centres

Assessment centres across the province continue to operate with the intent to support efforts to identify and contain COVID-19 in Nova Scotia. Those working in assessment centres are reminded to ensure they request the best contact number for people being screened so that they can be contacted with their results. To learn more, please visit NSHA's public [COVID-19 assessment page](#).

### Referrals to Coronavirus Assessment Centres

Pre-Screening Guidelines for patients presenting at Ambulatory Clinics and Primary Health Care clinics are available below. This provides a clear direction on referral to Coronavirus Assessment Centres using the Fax Form linked below.

- [March 14 - Quick Reference Guide to Screening for Ambulatory Clinics and Primary Care Offices](#) (PDF)
- [March 14 - Fax Referral Form for Coronavirus Assessment Clinics](#) (PDF)
- [March 14 - Covid-19 Lab Request to Accommodate Swabs](#) (PDF)

### Child care arrangements

In light of the [announcement](#) made this afternoon by Premier Stephen McNeil regarding the cancellation of all March Break camps and the closure of all day cares (March 17 to April 3), along with public schools being closed for two weeks following March Break

(weeks of March 23 and March 30, we encourage all staff with children to make alternate child care arrangements as soon as possible. The length of closures will be reassessed.

We appreciate that this is short notice but trust that you will have already made alternate child care arrangements that you can use when your usual arrangements are unavailable. Please contact your manager to discuss any issues that may impact your return to work as scheduled.

### **Work at Home Policy**

With many questions being raised about working at home, managers are encouraged to refer to the [Work from Home Policy](#) to use as a guideline when making considerations and arrangements with staff. Any updates on this direction will be provided when available. The Work from Home Policy is not effective until April 1, 2020 but because of the current COVID-19 situation, the policy is effective immediately.

### **Potential to cancel vacation**

With the announcement of three presumptive COVID-19 cases in Nova Scotia, decisions around cancelling vacations and/or recalling from vacations will be made and communicated by the organization.

Vacation time is not a 100% guarantee at any time. Each collective agreement has some provisions permitting the employer to cancel vacation or recall from vacation. This decision is not exercised lightly.

If your vacation is cancelled it will be done so in accordance with your respective collective agreement or your terms and conditions of employment.

### **Morneau Shepell Employee & Family Assistance Program**

Nova Scotia Health Authority's Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) can be of great assistance in a time of uncertainty. Morneau Shepell provides immediate and confidential assistance for any work, health or life concern for both employees and their families who reside together. Your EFAP can be reached by calling 1-800-461-5558 or visiting <https://www.workhealthlife.com>.

### **Be aware of increased phishing attempts**

Some jurisdictions are reporting that threat actors are taking advantage of the Coronavirus/COVID-19 situation while people are distracted and are sending emails that



appear to come from reputable organizations offering COVID information (e.g. the World Health Organization). Phishing attempts can compromise the security of NSHEALTH network accounts, patient information and your personal information. **Please remain vigilant and be on alert for phishing emails and only click on links that come from trusted sources. Action required:**

- Review the NSHA phishing prevention materials on the Privacy [intranet](#) page.
- If you receive suspicious email messages, **do not click any links or download any attachments** - just forward the entire email to [reportphishing@nshealth.ca](mailto:reportphishing@nshealth.ca) and delete it from your inbox.
- If you click on a link in an email and you suspect that it was a phishing email, please contact the ICT Service Desk immediately.
- If you believe the privacy of patients or employees has been compromised as result of this incident, please log a SIMS incident right away or contact [privacy@nshealth.ca](mailto:privacy@nshealth.ca).

#### **Report available laptops**

Anyone that has a laptop available is requested to send an email to [IMITProjectServices@nshealth.ca](mailto:IMITProjectServices@nshealth.ca) and include the following information:

- a. Name
- b. Zone and Location (i.e. what building they are located in)
- c. Department
- d. Number of laptops available (if reporting for department) and if they have chargers
- e. Device Asset Tags/Numbers per device
- f. Email Address & Contact Phone Number (if reporting for department, include all individuals contact info)

#### **Cleaning of laptops and handheld devices**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends cleaning surfaces, followed by disinfection, as a best practice for the prevention of Coronavirus and other viral respiratory illnesses in households and community settings.

To clean your computer, laptop or phone, it is recommended using a 70 per cent isopropyl alcohol and 30 per cent water disinfectant. Isopropyl Alcohol is sold in most stores and may also be called rubbing alcohol. Wipe down the high-touch, external

surfaces of your product and avoid getting moisture in any openings. Don't submerge your product in any cleaning agents or don't use bleach.

#### **Staff travel and management vacation**

**Any** staff that have travelled outside of the country are now required to self-isolate for 14 days. Individuals are not permitted to go to their worksite until they have completed this isolation period.

All NSHA employees who have travelled outside of Canada over the past 14 days and are symptomatic are required to call **1-833-750-0632** (Occupational Health) to report that they have returned home. They will be assessed on the call. Employees are to call this number and **not 811**.

If an employee is asymptomatic they must contact their manager (*do not call the toll free Occupational Health number*) and may be placed on one of two statuses: 1) working from home or 2) on paid administrative leave. For more information, [click here](#).

All management/non-union vacation is suspended. This action is being taken in response to the global pandemic declaration by the [World Health Organization](#) and the fact that there is a reasonable operational concern. As a result we will assess vacations on a case by case basis. Please contact your manager to discuss your individual vacation plans. All managers should expect that they will be recalled if their vacation continues to be approved, and must be available for recall. For more information, [click here](#).

#### **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.

For up-to-date information, please visit NSHA's [coronavirus intranet page](#).

Further questions can be directed to [coronavirus@nshealth.ca](mailto:coronavirus@nshealth.ca).