

Special Bulletin

from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health



Date: September 4, 2020

To: Nova Scotia Health Care Providers (including 811/911)

Topic: 2019 Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH), Department of Health and Wellness, in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. As we continue to understand the presentation of SARS-CoV2 with the progression of the pandemic, we are taking the opportunity to revise the 811 screening criteria beginning on September 4, 2020. These screening criteria will be used for the general population of Nova Scotia. Occupational Health in the NSHA and the IWK and the Continuing Care sector will have their own policies regarding PPE use and admissions protocols. Furthermore, the Continuing Care sector will maintain screening, monitoring and active surveillance as per the [COVID-19 Management in Long Term Care Facilities Directive Under the Authority of the Chief Medical Officer of Health](#). The revised 811 screening criteria for testing is now as follows:

In the past 48 hours have you had, or are you currently experiencing:

Fever **OR** Cough (new or worsening)

OR

Two or more of the following symptoms (new or worsening);

- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Shortness of breath

If at all possible, virtual screening of patients should occur before patients present for any in office care. A suggested way to do this would be to have patients completing the 811 online assessment before they come to the office: <https://when-to-call-about-covid19.novascotia.ca/en>. If screening is done in another manner, any patient who meets screening criteria as above should be directed to call 811 to arrange COVID 19 testing.

It is also important to screen for clients who may be under self-isolation requirements. Screening questions should include the above symptoms as well as:

- Is the patient waiting for COVID-19 test results?
- Has the patient tested positive for COVID-19?
- Has the patient had close contact with someone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19?
- Has the patient travelled outside of Atlantic Canada within the past 14 days?

Office-based Infection Prevention and Control

Follow standard precautions in your office/community clinic as you would for other respiratory illnesses:

- screen patients on intake and for those with respiratory symptoms or those who are under self-isolation requirements (as above), provide a medical mask (N95 not required) and separate from other patients (a 2-meter separation is recommended).
- ask patients to practice respiratory etiquette (wear a medical mask and use tissues for coughing, sneezing, and controlling nasal secretions with immediate disposal of tissue in waste receptacle followed by hand hygiene).
- practice good hand hygiene (both patient and care provider) by using alcohol-based hand rub or water/soap if hands are visibly soiled.