

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19: Case Definition; Accessing & Managing Results  
**Date:** May 22, 2020  
**Pages:** 2 (with attachment)  
**To:** Primary Care Providers, Emergency Room Physicians  
**From:** Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO

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## Case Definition

This was updated on May 11, 2020 and clarifies the definition of a Probable Case:

- A person with COVID-19 symptoms and an epidemiologic link (to recent travel, a known case, or a facility in COVID-19 outbreak) who has not been tested.
- A person with COVID-19 symptoms who has an inconclusive laboratory result.

Probable cases should self-isolate and follow the same recommendations as confirmed cases.

## Accessing COVID-19 Test Results

Patients can access their own COVID-19 test results using Ontario's COVID-19 Test Results Website at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>. Patients need a valid (green) Ontario photo health card. Please note that results typically take up to four days before they appear online. Depending on provincial testing volumes, some results may take longer to be available.

## Managing Patients with a Positive Result

Please see attached for a resource to support the management of COVID-19 positive patients in your practice. Though WDG Public Health will follow up with all positive cases, there are several things that primary care providers can do including:

- Instructing your patient about how to properly self-isolate
- Recommending appropriate self-care while isolating
- Recommending that your patient's household contacts self-isolate
- Asking your patient to consider who their close contacts would have been in the community
- Reminding your patient to follow up if their signs or symptoms worsen

## Counselling Patients about a Negative Result

For patients who are tested with a low index of suspicion, a negative result should be reassuring. These patients can discontinue self-isolation and return to normal activities as soon as they are feeling well, though they should continue to maintain physical distancing. If symptoms change or worsen, re-testing for COVID-19 should be considered.

If you have a high index of suspicion that your patient is a case, then a single negative test result may be less helpful. Published estimates of the sensitivity of RT-PCR testing range from approximately 70-90%, with a preliminary review of Public Health Ontario Laboratory data finding a sensitivity of 85%.<sup>1</sup> Where there is a high index of suspicion despite a negative test result, please apply clinical judgement to determine whether continued self-isolation is warranted.

## References

1. Public Health Ontario. COVID-19 Resources and Questions from the Field. [email]. 2020 May 8.

## Additional Resources

Guidance for the Health Sector:

[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/2019_guidance.aspx)

COVID-19 Guidance: Primary Care Providers in a Community Setting:

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019\\_primary\\_care\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_primary_care_guidance.pdf)

Public health management of cases and contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario:

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019\\_PH\\_Mgmt\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_PH_Mgmt_guidance.pdf)

COVID-19 Patient Screening Guidance Document:

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019\\_patient\\_screening\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_patient_screening_guidance.pdf)

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