

Updated COVID-19 Testing Guidance Issued from Ministry

Update to York Region health care providers as of April 16, 2020

On April 15, 2020, Ontario's Ministry of Health issued new guidance on testing for COVID-19. This is an update to the communication issued by the Ministry of Health and York Region Public Health on April 9, 2020 (available at york.ca/healthprofessionals). It highlights six new priority groups in addition to the four groups previously identified to further increase the testing of Ontarians. The guidance gives details on these groups, and when to test members of each category. The updated list of prioritized groups is as follows, with the new additions bolded and definitions provided below:

- Hospital Inpatients
- Residents Living in Long-Term care and Retirement Homes
- **Residents of Other Congregate Living Settings and Institutions**
- **Persons Working in Congregate Living Settings and Institutions**
- Healthcare Workers/ Caregivers/ Care Providers/ First Responders
- **Persons Living in the Same Household of Healthcare Workers/Care Providers/First Responders**
- Remote/Isolated/Rural/Indigenous Communities
- **Specific Priority Populations**
- **Essential Workers**
- **Cross-Border Workers**

As a reminder, testing of asymptomatic individuals is generally not recommended. Despite this guidance, clinicians may continue to use their discretion to make decisions on which individuals to test. Symptomatic individuals are encouraged to seek assessment at one of three COVID-19 Assessment Centres in York Region located at Southlake Regional Health Centre, Mackenzie Health and Markham Stouffville Hospital.

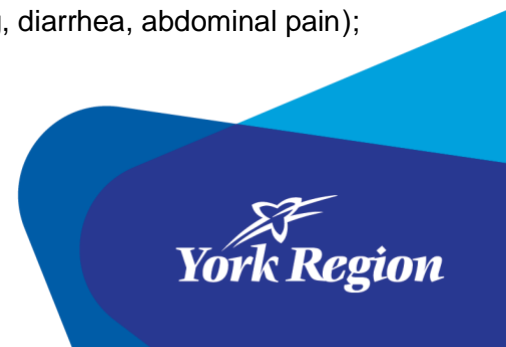
Additional Recommended Priority Groups for COVID-19 testing by the Ministry of Health

1. Residents of Other Congregate Living Settings and Institutions

Definition: Persons living in all other congregate living settings and institutions (e.g. homeless shelters, prisons, correctional facilities, day care for essential workers, group homes, community supported living, disability-specific communities/congregate settings, short-term rehab, hospices, other shelters)

Any patient/resident under the following guidelines should be tested:

- a. **Symptomatic patients/residents** who are experiencing one of the following symptoms, revised from previous guidance:
- Fever (Temperature of 37.8°C or greater); OR
 - Any new/worsening acute respiratory illness symptom (e.g. cough, shortness of breath (dyspnea), sore throat, runny nose or sneezing, nasal congestion, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing, new olfactory or taste disorder(s), nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain); OR
 - Clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia.
 - Atypical presentations of COVID-19 should be considered, particularly in elderly persons, children, and people living with a developmental disability.



b. Asymptomatic patients:

- Patients transferred from hospital to a LTCH/RH must be tested and results received prior to the transfer. All patients should remain under a 14-day self-isolation period following transfer.

2. Persons Working in Congregate Living Settings and Institutions

Definition: Persons working/providing care in all other congregate living settings and institutions not covered by the previous congregate living settings guidance (e.g. homeless shelters, prisons, correctional facilities, day care for essential workers, group homes, community supported living, disability-specific communities/congregate settings, hospices)

3. Persons Living in Same Household of Healthcare Workers/ Care Providers/ First Responders

Definition: Symptomatic persons living in the same household (or similar close regular contact) as a healthcare worker, care providers (e.g., employees, privately-hired support workers) and first responders

4. Specific Priority Populations

Definition: Patients requiring frequent contact with the healthcare system due to the nature of their current course of treatment for an underlying condition (e.g. patients undergoing chemotherapy/cancer treatment, dialysis, pre-/post-transplant, pregnant persons, neonates)

- Newborns born to mothers with suspected or known COVID-19 at the time of birth should be tested for COVID-19 within 24 hours of delivery, regardless of symptoms.

5. Essential Workers

Definition: Essential workers not covered under previous guidance, in line with the current provincial list of workers who are critical to preserving life, health and basic societal functioning

NOTE: This list is subject to change based on provincial guidance issued here:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>

6. Cross-border workers

Definition: Workers not covered in previous guidance, who reside in Ontario, but who cross the Canadian border for work

Atypical Symptoms/Signs of COVID-19

Symptoms: Unexplained fatigue/malaise; Delirium (acutely altered mental status and inattention); Falls; Acute functional decline; Exacerbation of chronic conditions; Digestive symptoms, including nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain; Chills; Headaches; Croup

Signs: Unexplained tachycardia, including age specific tachycardia for children; Decrease in blood pressure; Unexplained hypoxia (even if mild i.e. O₂ sat <90%); Lethargy, difficulty feeding in infants (if no other diagnosis)

For more information

Call our dedicated health professional COVID-19 line at **1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280** (8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week, after hours call 905-953-6478). Continue to visit york.ca/healthprofessionals, york.ca/covid19 and Ontario.ca/covid19 for up to date information on COVID-19.