



**DATE:** March 13, 2020

**TO:** Emergency Health Services Medical First Response Agencies

**SUBJECT:** Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update #2

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Emergency Health Services (EHS) Medical First Response (MFR) Services would like to share an update with you regarding what EHS is doing to prepare for COVID-19, and what is happening behind the scenes and on the frontlines to support Nova Scotians.

### **EHS and TeleHealth (811 Telecare)**

EHS and 811 Telecare have been actively participating in the health care system response to COVID-19 in collaboration with Department of Health & Wellness (DHW), Health Services Emergency Management (ESEM), and the Office of Public Health. Using a collaborative team-based approach that involves the IWK, Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA), and all branches of DHW for Nova Scotia to operationalize the readiness of provincial health care teams. Systems have been put in place to screen patients, share information between organizations, and manage exposures.

### **What are we doing on the frontlines?**

On the frontlines, 811 Telecare and the EHS Medical Communication Centre (MCC) have been surveying patients. If callers meet the criteria for COVID-19, then paramedics are advised to wear personal protective equipment to avoid possible exposure to the virus. MFRs will not be notified to attend a call with a positive survey.

The questions below are being asked by MCC to all patients:

**QUESTION 1:** *In the past 14 days, has the patient travelled outside Canada?*

**QUESTION 2:** *In the past 14 days, has the patient been in close contact (within 2 metres) with a confirmed case of covid-19?*

**QUESTION 3:** *In the past 14 days, has the patient been in close contact with a person with a fever OR a new onset (or exacerbation of chronic) cough who has travelled outside of Canada within 14 days prior to their illness?*

- If the patient answers **NO** to Question 1, 2, AND 3, triage/assess as per normal (this is a **negative** COVID-19 survey)
- If the answer is **YES** to Question 1, 2 OR 3, **ask Question 4**

**QUESTION 4:** *Does the patient have a fever or symptoms of a fever (over 38 degrees C) OR new onset of (or exacerbation of chronic) cough?*

If **yes**, this patient is considered a **Person Who Meets Screening Criteria**.

### **What can you do to protect yourself?**

There are excellent resources available federally and provincially to help keep you and your loved ones safe. Please visit the following websites for more information.

#### [Government of Canada: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Awareness resources](#)

- Outbreak update
- Symptoms & treatment
- Prevention & risk
- Being prepared
- For health professionals
- Canada's response
- Travel advice
- Awareness resources
- Guidance documents

#### [Nova Scotia: Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

- Public health officials are working closely with colleagues across the country, and partners here in Nova Scotia, to prepare and respond to the increased likelihood of more COVID-19 infections in Canada.
- There have been no confirmed cases of the virus in Nova Scotia at this time. The public will be informed if a case is confirmed.

- The situation with COVID-19 is rapidly evolving and it is important for Nova Scotians to keep up to date, using credible sources of information.

### **MCC Modified MFR Response Protocol:**

The Medical Communications Centre (MCC) will be screening incoming 911 calls using International Academy of Emergency Dispatch (IAED) standards. The screening will consist of specific questions to determine if a patient has a high risk of having the coronavirus (see questions above). If a patient is suspected of having the coronavirus, MFRs will not be notified for the call.

### **What can you do to protect yourself on scene?**

Through patient surveys, the MCC and 811 Telecare are trying to avoid sending MFRs to a possible COVID-19 patient. Saying that, the screening process is not guaranteed to identify all patients infected by the virus. We recommend you practice the following on scene of every call:

- Have only two MFRs assess the patient to minimize possible exposure. The remaining members can assist after you determine the scene is safe.
- Stop, prior to approaching the patient (minimum 2m) and ask the COVID-19 screening questions to the patient.
  - (1) Recent travel to where severe coronaviruses are known to occur in past 14 days, OR
  - (2) Close contact to persons associate with COVID-19, AND
  - (3) SOB, fever, new onset of, or increased chronic cough
- If the answer is **YES** to any of these questions then do not approach the patient. Wait for paramedics and tell them you suspect the patient has COVID-19.
- After you remove your PPE, wash your hands and disinfect any equipment that might have been exposed to the coronavirus.

If you have any questions or concerns related to this topic please reach out to Greg Down ([greg.down@emci.ca](mailto:greg.down@emci.ca)) or myself ([max.davis@emci.ca](mailto:max.davis@emci.ca)). We are happy to support you.

Sincerely,

Max Davis

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