

January 3, 2022

Dear Patient:

Without doubt you are fully aware that COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (2019 coronavirus), remains an ongoing pandemic. This has presented many challenges to the health care system and essentially all aspects of life for everyone.

The latest variant of the virus, the omicron variant, is spreading quickly and various measures are being introduced to try and slow down the rate of new infections. Fortunately, most recent cases of this viral infection in the fully vaccinated are mild and require no treatment at all, just rest and staying at home.

The directives of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Toronto Public Health are now changing quickly and changing frequently, and we are doing our best to accommodate these changes, but this has been quite challenging. We appreciate your patience with scheduling changes, and with increasing delays in getting back to you – this is due to the sheer volume of a variety of requests, unavailability of many specialists, and tripling or more of paperwork in the recent months.

Clinic operations currently are as follows:

1. The clinic remains open Monday through Friday 9am-5pm if you need to pick up forms, test kits, schedule appointments in person, and attend in-person appointments.
2. If you have a telephone appointment booked, your phone call may be from a blocked or unknown number so please answer the phone and be sure your phone can accept these types of calls. If you do not answer, a new appointment will have to be scheduled. Please be sure you are somewhere:
 - quiet with no distractions,
 - with a good phone connection
 - that you are available 15 min before and up to 30 min after your scheduled appointment time

3. If you have an in-person appointment booked, you must wear a mask inside the clinic per usual protocols, and you will need to answer screening questions about symptoms and recent testing. Please note “annual physical examinations” are not deemed essential and these are not being booked at this time. You should still perform age-appropriate health screening tests.

4. If you require blood work forms, you can receive them by email and you can print them, you can email them to the lab 24 hours prior to your lab appointment, or you can pick-up them up in person from the clinic. For prescription refills, please have your pharmacy fax a request for medication renewals as per the usual protocol.

5. The rules about COVID-19 test availability are constantly changing and you can check online about who can be tested:

<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-health-advice/covid-19-assessment-centres/>

6. If you have **severe respiratory symptoms** like shortness of breath or fever that is not responding to Tylenol then you should go to an emergency department. Do not go to an emergency department with mild or no symptoms looking for a COVID-19 test, they will not perform one.

7. **Prevention is critical** – practice physical distancing of at least 2 metres, wear a mask when indoors in public places and anywhere when you cannot maintain a 2 metre space, wash your hands properly and try not touch your eyes.

Because this coronavirus is mainly spread by respiratory droplets/aerosols, and infection can occur 1-3 days before you might have any symptoms, **a mask will help protect you and help protect others.** Even if you feel fine you still might be contagious. Currently masking is the best known measure of protection other than vaccination; also note that you are less contagious if you have been fully vaccinated and nonetheless become infected (which is not uncommon with the circulating omicron variant).



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8. **Mental health** maintenance is important during these times when many of us have fatigue from trying to adjust and follow changing restrictions to the best of our abilities. Our clinic website has information about online resources to help look after your mental health.

Again, thank you all for your patience during this pandemic.

Regards,

Dr. Jason Brunetta