

March 23, 2020

Dear Patient:

As you know, the province has declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is the term used to describe the respiratory illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Extraordinary measures have taken place in order to slow the spread of the virus in Canada. Fortunately most cases will be mild or moderate in severity and require no treatment at all, just rest and staying at home.

The measures that have taken place are an attempt to slow the spread of the virus so that the healthcare system is not overwhelmed by severe cases occurring all at the same time.

In order to do our part to slow the spread of the virus the following recommendations, and changes to my clinic operations, have been put into place:

1. Do not come to the clinic unless you have received instruction to do so. There is a good chance the doors will be closed because staff may be working from home.
2. For now, **all appointments will be booked as telephone assessments.** You will receive a phone call from a blocked number so please answer the phone. If you do not answer, a new appointment will have to be scheduled. If your telephone blocks incoming calls from blocked numbers, please ensure that you disable that function otherwise we will not be able to reach you.

If a physical (in-person) examination is required you will be provided very specific instructions on how and when that will occur.

To book a telephone appointment, you must call to arrange a time.

Use common sense, if the problem is minor, please wait for a more appropriate time to arrange an appointment.

3. If you have any respiratory-related symptoms (i.e. cough, fever) and you are concerned about COVID-19 you can use this **self-assessment tool**:

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/#q0>

4. If you have any respiratory-related symptoms (i.e. cough, fever) **stay home for 14 days**. Instructions for how to self-isolate are at the end of this document.

5. If you are HIV-positive and are on anti-retrovirals then there is no evidence to suggest you are at higher risk for acquiring COVID-19 nor are you at greater risk for having more severe disease if you do. This is our current understanding.

6. If you are HIV-positive or on PrEP and have been using your medication as prescribed, and you are due to complete blood work, I recommend for the time being that you delay going into the lab. Your medications will still be renewed. Please have your pharmacy fax a request for medication renewals as per the usual protocol.

7. COVID-19 tests can only be done at **designated assessment centres**. To find one near you (the closest to our clinic is at Women's College Hospital and St. Michael's Hospital) you can use this website:

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

Please read through the instructions on this site because you will only offered the test in certain circumstances.

8. 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. Mask yourself when leaving the house (if you have one), or immediately before or upon entry to the hospital. Please avoid using public transit if possible. Advise the staff there that you have respiratory symptoms.

9. **Prevention is critical** – practice both social distancing (instructions follow) and washing your hands properly. **Washing your hands is better** than hand sanitizer and is preferred if both are available to you.

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/jcyh-handwash.pdf?la=en>

Thank you for your cooperation during this pandemic.

Regards,

Drs. Megan Acsai, Benny Chang, Frederic Crouzat and Kevin Giolma

