

Mar 20, 2020



Dear Chiefs and Health Directors,

I am writing to you today to provide public health recommendations to take immediate action to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your communities.

Our communicable disease staff have been following the latest information about the spread of COVID-19 in the United States, Canada and Ontario. The situation is changing hourly.

As you know, there is currently a lack of testing supplies in Ontario. The provincial and the federal governments are working to get this resolved and improve testing capacity as soon as possible. However, we cannot wait for more testing capacity to take the needed actions to prevent the spread of the virus. We must act now.

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 – fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, runny nose, muscles aches, and excessive tiredness – should assume they have the virus and take steps to stay away from others as much as possible. **DO NOT WAIT FOR A TEST** to confirm you have the virus. Having a test will not change what you need to do immediately to take care of yourself and prevent the virus from spreading to others.

Most people will get better on their own at home. For people who do become more severely sick, they should call their health care provider for advice on whether to seek care at the nursing station or the hospital. Difficulty breathing is a sign that you should call for advice. You do not need a test result to seek health advice if you become worse.

Please advise your residents of this recommendation. Continue to practice all the previously communicated actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Hand washing and hygiene – you cannot do this too much
- Cover your cough or sneeze
- **STAY HOME IF YOU HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS** and stay away from people at home as much as you can
- Practice social distancing when out of your home to get needed supplies such as groceries and medications.
- Clean high touch surfaces, such as door handles and remote controls, frequently.
- Do not share personal items such as utensils and toothbrushes.

Thank you for all of your efforts. Working together, we can stop the spread.

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