

**COVID-19 Triage and Clinical Care:**  
**Quick links / FAQ support document for family practice clinical teams**  
*Thank you for everything you are doing.*

**CLINICAL TRIAGE**

**When do I send to ED / see in person in clinic or assessment centre/ remotely assess?**

Direct patient to call 911 and proceed to emergency room if:

- Difficulty in breathing or worsening trouble breathing
- Chest pain
- Decrease in oxygen level by 3% from usual or is below 93% at any time
- New onset of confusion, becoming difficult to rouse, syncope
- Blue lips or face
- Coughing up blood

Children: severe problems with:

**Breathing** Gasping for air, unable to catch their breath, working to breathe

**Drinking** Dry lips and mouth, not urinating (peeing), refusing to drink, unable to stop vomiting

**Behaviour** Disoriented, confused, unable to wake up, seizures/ convulsions, fainting

Pale/grey/blue skin or lips, chest pain,

**Fever in baby** <3 months old OR > 5 days at any age (MIS-C risk)

**In-person assessment needed** if patient says they:

- Feel lightheaded or dehydrated
- Have persistent diarrhea
- Have increasing or significant fatigue
- Started feeling better and then get worse again (especially 5-8 days after the start of your symptoms)

**Urgent phone call consultation** if patient says they

- Have worsening symptoms
- Have noticed a worsening of their pre-existing health condition
- Have challenges self-isolating because they cannot access food or other essential supports
- Feel suicidal

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**CLINICAL MONITORING**

**If a patient with COVID calls and is sick / has symptoms and you want to know how to monitor:**

See **Tab #6 Monitoring and #7 Management** here: <https://hfam.ca/clinical-pathways-and-evidence/covid/assessment-diagnosis-and-management-of-covid/>

**Who doesn't need monitoring?**

For healthy patients who contact you and are able to stay home with less severe illness, a one off consultation is all that's needed to discuss core components of self-care and get them to self monitor, calling you only if worsening symptoms.

Rest (7-8 hours sleep minimum if possible), consistent hydration, keep mobile (but do not induce dyspnea), maintain relationships / communication with others within the restrictions of isolation

Send all patients this information on self-care and red flags to seek care: <https://hfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Patient-Information-Long-Form-version-2021-05-19.pdf>

**Who needs monitoring and how often?**

The risk assessment tool in [#6 Monitoring and Followup / Risk Assessment](#) on hfam.ca has detailed guides who needs regular monitoring calls, and the recommended frequency. Briefly:

**High risk:** Worsening symptoms; Not triple vaccinated and >60 or comorbidities or social risk factors. Daily for a week and then guided by clinical progress

**Medium risk:** Pregnancy; >60 or comorbidities and triple vaccinated with no concerning symptoms (e.g. dyspnea, significant diarrhoea)

Every few days for a week then guided by clinical progress

**Low risk:** No symptoms; Healthy adults <60 no comorbidities.

No monitoring needed unless increasing symptoms. Send patient information sheet as safety net.

**Who should have a pulse oximeter?**

Patients in the high risk group should be loaned a pulse oximeter if they don't already have one. Consider for average risk.

**Where can I order pulse oximeters?**

[COVID@Home Monitoring for Primary Care \(alchemer.com\)](#). They will ask you details about practice size, etc., and will help you estimate how many you need. Delivery 2 days from processing order.

**What is recommended for consultation for those who need closer monitoring?**

Monitoring is virtual and can be done by phone or video with the patient at home

**One page guide to an initial and follow up monitoring consultation:** <https://hfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/COVID-Patients-Ward-Round-Flow-for-hfam-2022-01-02.pdf>

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### What are those isolation rules again??

The isolation period for both cases and close contacts is either 5 or 10 days, depending on age and vaccination status is available here: (#8 Isolation Guidelines) <https://hfam.ca/clinical-pathways-and-evidence/covid/assessment-diagnosis-and-management-of-covid/>

**Who is a “close contact”?** For isolation purposes “Close contact” is anyone with whom the COVID-19 positive person came into close contact within the 48 hours prior to symptom onset if symptomatic or 48 hours prior to the test date if asymptomatic, and until the positive person started self-isolating.

Close contact means you were in close proximity to them for at least 15 minutes, or for multiple short periods of time, without appropriate personal protective equipment.

### What about me? Can I work if I am a close contact?

Yes, under certain circumstances See here: <https://hfam.ca/clinical-pathways-and-evidence/work-accommodation-risk-assessment-and-return-to-work/>

### Where can I find the criteria for testing / diagnosis criteria?

Latest diagnosis / testing criteria will always be found here: <https://hfam.ca/clinical-pathways-and-evidence/covid/diagnostic-testing-pathways/>

**What information is there I can send to patients?** Latest patient information sheets from HFAM:

Adults: <https://hfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Patient-Information-Long-Form-version-2021-05-19.pdf>

Parents: <https://hfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Caregiver-Information.pdf>

Translations: <https://hfam.ca/clinical-pathways-and-evidence/translated-guides-for-covid-patients-being-monitored-at-home/>

### What should I advise in the recovery phase?

- Consistent hydration with water
- Well balanced plant-rich diet
- Movement: Keep mobile and gently increase exercise tolerance (but do not make breathing fast or heart rate elevated). Gradual return with rest days and without “pushing it” is important.
- Healthy relationships and communication with others within the bounds of isolation restrictions
- 7-8 hours of sleep

### Other good self-help and information resources to direct patients to

- Hamilton Public Health: <https://www.hamilton.ca/coronavirus/covid-19-have-symptoms-or-been-exposed>
- HFAM patients’ resources page: <https://hfam.ca/patient-resources/>
- Ontario Health <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>  
Public Health Agency of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html>