

COVID-19 Key Messages for family practice reception teams



Thank you for everything you are doing.

Overarching messages:

The number of Omicron cases is rising so rapidly in Ontario that those with COVID-19 symptoms can be presumed to be infected with COVID-19.

If you have symptoms, stay home and self-isolate immediately. Inform those you have been in contact with over the past 48 hours. This is how we will reduce transmission in our community.

COVID-19 testing is being prioritized to help protect those at greatest risk of severe illness who are eligible for specific treatments to keep them out of hospital, and those living and working in highest risk healthcare settings. This will help mitigate impacts on hospitals and the broader health system, and on society overall.

The number of people with omicron is so high that the patterns of clinical symptoms is enough to confirm the diagnosis and testing is not necessary.

The Omicron variant appears to have milder symptoms for the majority of people and most people will not need medical care.

The Omicron variant still causes serious illness in a smaller group of people. We want people more likely to be in this group to contact their primary care early in their illness, to make a plan as they may need closer monitoring, medication changes or referral for special treatments to reduce the risk of hospital admission. The group includes people who are >60 or have long-term medical conditions or are pregnant or are unvaccinated.

If a patient calls and asks for a COVID test:

Provincial guidance on who is eligible for a PCR test has changed.

Primary care offices are not able to test people who do not meet these eligibility criteria.

Most people do not need a COVID test to confirm their diagnosis.

You can now get a test booking quickly at testing centres if you are eligible. The website with information on eligibility and where you can access a test is: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations>

COVID tests are now being reserved for non hospitalised patients who have symptoms and who are:

- In higher risk/congregate settings (e.g. living or working in shelter, nursing home, hospitals, etc.) or household members of those workers
- Higher-risk individuals for more serious illness (aged ≥ 18 who are immunocompromised (have an immune system that is weakened by a health condition or medications); Individuals aged 70 and over; Individuals aged 60 and over with fewer than three vaccine doses; and any other individuals aged 18 and over with fewer than three vaccine doses and at least one risk condition (e.g., a chronic medical condition) those who are 50+ and Indigenous
- Pregnant
- Front line workers in fire, police or paramedic services

For comprehensive information on COVID specifically for family practice teams, see HFAM link: <https://hfam.ca/clinical-pathways-and-evidence/>