

Screening and Testing for COVID-19 by Primary Care, Community Health and Home & Community Care RNs and LPNs within the NITHA partnership



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A Registered Nurse (RN) Clinical Protocol outlines a series of registered nursing actions that are implemented in pre-determined situations to provide specialized client care in Saskatchewan. A RN who implements a RN Clinical Protocol must meet the criteria as outlined in the current SRNA document, *Standards for RN Specialty Practices (2015)*. This RN clinical protocol contains evidenced-informed content that is used in conjunction with a RN’s critical thinking and clinical judgment to determine when it is appropriate for it to be implemented according to the client’s presenting health situation. This RN Clinical Protocol is based on the principle that the appropriate resources are readily available in the employment setting.

MEDICAL DIRECTIVE

Employer policy and procedure, along with this Medical Directive, will provide the authority and direction for Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurse (LPNs) working within the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA) partnership community, who have the necessary training, to screen and test for: - COVID-19. RNs and LPNs must follow the most current provincial screening guidelines and testing procedures and ensure testing methods adhere to the RN Scope of practice as identified by SRNA and/or LPN Scope of Practice as identified by SALPN.

The NITHA MHO will authorize this medical directive and provide technical guidance and support for RNs & LPNs who are authorized by their employer to provide the services described in this Medical Directive "Screening and Testing for COVID-19".

RNs & LPNs must adhere to the conditions as described in this document in order for the medical directive to be in effect.

	March 27/2020	
Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka	Date Approved	Date Reviewed

HIGH ALERT

- **All clients are to be screened utilizing the criteria in the current provincial guidelines**
- **Clients who present with severe symptoms or symptoms incompatible with COVID-19 should be referred to a primary care provider or emergency department for further assessment.**
- **RNs/LPNs performing screening & testing must complete a point of care assessment and wear appropriate PPE, as indicated in the current provincial guidelines.**
- **Clients identified to have symptoms of influenza-like illness or acute respiratory illness must be given a surgical mask to wear and appropriately separated from other individuals**

RN/LPN EDUCATION / CERTIFICATION / QUALIFICATION

RNs must have active licensure with the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association (SRNA)

LPNs must have active licensure with the Saskatchewan Association for Licensed Practical Nurses (SALPN)

RNs & LPNs will maintain competence by:

- Reviewing this Medical Directive and appropriate employer policy and procedure
- Reviewing the CD Manual Chapter on COVID-19 and other applicable provincial guidelines
- Completing learning activities as required by employer as per local and/or FNIHB guidelines
- Reading memos for updates and changes as they emerge, including checking the NITHA website at www.nitha.com

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION

- Current certification in CPR
- Education in Screening for COVID-19
- Training for Nasopharyngeal Swab or alternative testing method recommended by provincial guidelines including collection, packaging, and transport.
- Certification in Transportation of Dangerous Goods every 3 years

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DEFINITION:

- Screening and Testing for COVID-19 by RNs/LPNs employed within the NITHA partnership
- COVID-19 is a reportable disease under The Public Health Act (1994) and must be reported to Ministry of Health.

ETIOLOGY:

- COVID-19 is currently a global pandemic and emergency measures need to be implemented to ensure access to testing as appropriate.
- The ability to offer testing services in First Nation communities reduces barriers in accessing health services, facilitates early detection of new cases, and potentially decreases the spread of infection.
- COVID-19 is a reportable disease under The Public Health Act (1994) and must be reported to Ministry of Health.

OBJECTIVE:

- To increase accessibility and timeliness of screening and testing for clients who may be at risk for COVID-19 based on the presence of symptoms and recent risk factors.
- Increasing accessibility to testing will help to identify any additional cases and contacts and ensure positive cases receive appropriate follow-up in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- To reduce the need for persons under investigation living on reserve to access testing in other areas in order to reduce the risk of transmission during transportation, in waiting rooms, etc.

ASSESSMENT, DIAGNOSIS & THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS:

- A client assessment will be conducted based on the current provincial screening guidelines, prior to conducting a nasopharyngeal swab test or alternative testing method recommended by current provincial guidelines.
- Clients who present with any of the following symptoms should be referred to the nearest emergency department for further assessment:
 - severe difficulty breathing;
 - severe chest pain;
 - having a very hard time waking up;
 - feeling confused; and/or
 - loss of consciousness.
- Clients who present with any of the following symptoms should be referred to their primary care provider for further assessment:
 - Shortness of breath at rest;
 - Inability to lie down because of difficulty breathing; and/or:
 - Chronic health conditions that are exasperated due to respiratory illness

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- Clients who meet the criteria for testing based on the presence of risk factors and symptoms should be tested via a nasopharyngeal swab or alternative testing method according to the current provincial guidelines for the specimen collection.
- The RN/LPN should complete a point of care assessment with the client to determine the appropriate PPE that should be worn when testing to limit risk of transmission.
- When assessing the client, the RN/LPN should determine and provide appropriate education regarding self-monitoring or self-isolation as applicable.

MANAGEMENT OF RESULTS

- The testing practitioner will receive a copy of the lab report (both positive and negative test results) through confidential fax from the Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory (RRPL).
- At this time, all COVID-19 results (both positive and negative) are also sent to the provincial MHO corresponding to the client's address. For First Nations clients with a rural address in close proximity to First Nations communities in northern Saskatchewan, a copy of the lab is also sent to the NITHA MHO.
- For COVID-19, the RN that is supporting CD follow-up in the community is responsible for informing the client of the result (either positive or negative) and for ensuring that the public health follow-up of positive results is completed.
- If a client tests positive for COVID-19, the NITHA MHO/CD Coordinator will provide specific direction on the follow-up that needs to be completed.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

To quickly identify new infections in order to reduce risk of further transmission

To support education about infection prevention and control precautions.

To provide appropriate recommendations regarding self-isolation or self-monitoring as applicable.

To refer clients who require further assessment based on the presence of severe symptoms.

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES:

Pain or discomfort related to screening procedures.

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COMMUNICATION:

All information acquired through testing and follow up will be managed confidentially.

- With Clients (or Guardians where applicable):
 - To complete screening.
 - To obtain informed consent for testing
 - To educate about the nature of the test, notification, contact tracing process, and subsequent follow-up, if required.
- To provide recommendations on self-isolation and self-monitoring as needed.
- See also ASSESSMENT and CLIENT EDUCATION sections
- With the local lab to:
 - Coordinate the drop off of specimens
- With Direct Supervisor/Nurse Manager as first contact for clinical support when:
 - Clarification of policy or procedure is required.
 - Consultation or guidance is needed regarding collection, storage, or transport of specimens.
 - Consultation is needed to determine plan of care.
 - The RN encounters an unusual situation or receives a client complaint.
 - Additional PPE or testing supplies are required.
- With the CD Coordinator or Medical Health Officer:
 - To share line lists of clients who have been tested in the community to facilitate tracking of results.
 - When consultation is needed for clarification of lab results or follow-up required

CLIENT EDUCATION

- Client education will be provided on COVID-19 in order to obtain informed consent for testing.
- Client education will be provided on infection prevention and control precautions to limit further transmission, and education will be provided for self-monitoring or self-isolation as needed based on the client assessment.

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DOCUMENTATION:

- Document in nursing notes as per employer protocol.
- Document the client's information in the testing line list so that results can be tracked accordingly.
- The appropriate lab requisition will be fully completed, according to the current provincial guidelines, and will include the ordering physician's name and information:
 - Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka, Medical Health Officer, NITHA
 - Physician's number: 0953
 - Mailing address: 2300-10th Ave West Prince Albert, SK S6V 5S4
 - Telephone: (306) 953-5000
 - Fax Number: (306) 953-5021

REFERENCES

Government of Saskatchewan. Public Health Act (1994).
Ministry of Health, www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus