MARCH 24, 2020

Coronavirus: what you need to know

As of March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared coronavirus (2019 Novel Coronavirus or 2019-nCoV) a pandemic. This means the organization has provided recommendations to all countries aimed at preventing or reducing cross-border spread of disease, while avoiding unnecessary interference with trade and travel.

Public health risk is continually reassessed as new information becomes available. For more information about coronavirus and access to other Public Health Authorities https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/2019-novel-coronavirus-information-sheet.html.

To limit the risk of transmitting the virus, Valley Medical Laboratories is implementing:

- Enhanced PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) requirements for staff
- Enhanced decontamination of our patient service center

- Active Screening protocols of patients <u>before</u> entering our facilities as follows:

    o Do you have fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness or pneumonia
    o Have you had recent travel outside Canada
    o Have you had close contact with an ill individual who is under investigation in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak or are you being investigated for Covid-19 yourself

- Patients who answer 'yes' to one or more of the above criteria will be given a form for their physician to re-assess the need for their lab tests
  The physician may:

    o Delay the testing if not urgent

    o Request an isolation appointment for semi-urgent testing

    o Refer patient to nearest IHA hospital ER for isolation collection for ill patients with critical/urgent testing needs

What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

Symptoms for the Novel Coronavirus have included:

- fever;
- cough; and
- difficulty breathing.

- **Why am I being asked to wear a mask if I don't have symptoms?**

  To ensure we are protecting our patients and employees, we are taking the additional measure of asking patients who have traveled to the affected regions but are asymptomatic (not showing/experiencing symptoms) to wear a mask.

  Additionally, we are asking patients who have any respiratory symptoms to wear a mask.

- **Are you testing patients for coronavirus?**

  Valley Medical Laboratories cannot test patients for coronavirus.

- **Where can I be tested for coronavirus?**

  Please phone your physician or 811 to discuss testing options and locations.

- **Is your waiting area safe?**

  We have implemented Active Screening Protocols in response to the recent escalation by World Health Organization (WHO), and to align with PHAC, Public Health and Provincial Health directives. We expect these screening protocols will minimize the exposure to patients with suspected coronavirus in our facilities.

  Patients who answer 'yes' to our screening criteria are being redirected to designated lab sites for isolation appointments.

  The usual measures recommended to prevent other common respiratory viruses during the winter season continue to be encouraged. Regular handwashing, coughing or sneezing into your elbow sleeve, and disposing of tissues appropriately are important ways to prevent the spread of respiratory illness generally.

- **Why are your employees wearing a mask and protective eye wear when providing service?**

  Our employees are trained to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when there is an escalated risk of transmission for any illness, including the common cold and flu. Should patients present a risk of infection/ transmission, they would don the appropriate PPE for the type of risk presented.

- **I get service from your home collection team, how do I know I'm safe?**

  Additional Active Screening precautions we have implemented at our facilities are also applied to our home collection team.

NOTICE FOR PHYSICIANS:

For more information, please see the Public Health website.

For Nasopharyngeal Swab pick up services please ensure samples are packed in a biohazard bag and clearly indicate CORONA VIRUS on the outside of the bag.   Contact our lab directly for pick up service.

National References:

World Health Organization

Centre for Disease Control