



College of Homeopaths of Ontario Resource for Registrant Questions and Answers on the Coronavirus COVID-19

March 18, 2020

Sections: COVID-19
Seeing and Treating Patients
Patient Protection
Public Health Reporting Requirements
Community Spread and Social Distancing
Handwashing, Personal Protective Equipment, Cleaning & Disinfecting
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COVID-19

Q1. What is a Coronavirus? ¹

Answer: Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease known as COVID-19.

Q2. What is COVID-19? ²

Answer: COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

Q3. How does COVID-19 spread? ³

Answer: People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 2 meters (6 feet) away from a person who is sick.

Q4. How long does the virus survive on surfaces? ⁴

Answer: It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

¹ Source: World Health Organization General Questions and Answers <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

² Source: World Health Organization General Questions and Answers <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

³ Source: World Health Organization General Questions and Answers <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

⁴ Source: World Health Organization General Questions and Answers <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill⁵ the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub (to be most effective should be 60% alcohol or greater) or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

Q5. How long is the incubation period for COVID-19? ⁶

Answer: The “incubation period” means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days. These estimates will be updated as more data become available.

Q6. What is the treatment?

Answer: Currently, there is no specific medical treatment for COVID-19. Most people will recover on their own by drinking plenty of fluids and resting as much as possible. Additionally, individuals may use a variety of products, remedies and non-medicinal approaches to find relief. Homeopaths may treat their patients based on their homeopathy education and training and on the College’s Scope of Practice as well on their own Personal Scope of Practice.

Q7. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

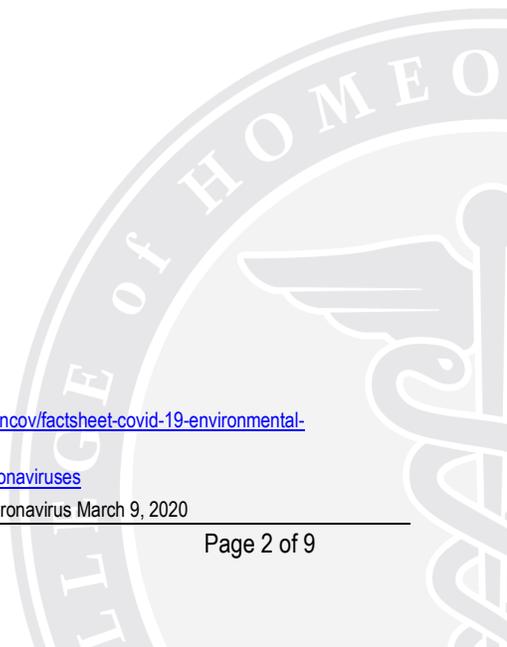
Answer: The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified the common signs of the disease as respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don’t develop any symptoms and don’t feel unwell. Symptoms in young children may also be non-specific (for example, lethargy, poor feeding). Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment.

A significant number of patients with COVID-19 will experience mild symptoms. Patients who develop extreme symptoms and severe respiratory distress may require hospitalization and ventilation. According to the World Health Organization⁷ around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention. Some will require hospital care. Timely monitoring and quick action to address extreme symptoms is required. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

⁵ PHO Factsheet on Cleaning and Disinfecting in Public Settings <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?1a=en>

⁶ Source: World Health Organization General Questions and Answers <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

⁷ World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses> Questions and Answers on Coronavirus March 9, 2020



Seeing and Treating Patients

Q8. Can I continue to treat patients during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Answer: Yes. There are very few limits to your ability to care for your patients. All health professionals are facing challenging times. Many in the public have understandable concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic and how it might affect them and their loved ones. For some individuals their concerns may present as fear and/or panic. Homeopaths have a unique approach to case taking which considers the mental, emotional and physical state of the patient and provides him/her with the most appropriate remedy.

When a patient calls for an appointment with flu-like symptoms, this does not necessarily mean this is a case of COVID-19. It is important that you do the following (by phone if at all possible):

1. Complete an intake form.
2. Obtain informed consent.
3. Take the case, note observed subjective and objective symptoms.
4. Do your analysis, individualize the case and prescribe a remedy based on the totality.
5. Do not communicate a diagnosis or tell the patient that they may have Coronavirus. Note: You may encourage your patient to visit the Ontario Ministry of Health website and click on the [Self-assessment Tab](#)⁸

Q9. What information should I consider when deciding to see patients in my clinic?

Answer: See the Ontario Medical Association's easy to follow guideline: [Guidance to Primary Care Providers in a community setting](#)⁹ This is also useful for homeopaths.

It is also important to ensure that you have [signs](#)¹⁰ on your clinic entry door asking patients and their family members to self-identify and not enter the clinic if they believe they have COVID-19 or are exhibiting signs of COVID-19. The signs should suggest that patients call the office for consultation over the phone.

Q10. What should I do if I suspect my patient has COVID-19?

Answer: In all cases you may provide your patient with homeopathy care to help them manage their symptoms and improve their health and wellbeing. [Interprofessional patient management](#)¹¹ is important in this situation puts the patient's best interest front and centre. It is important that you encourage your patient to follow the advice of public health when given.

If, based on your assessment or statements made by your patient, you suspect the patient may have been infected with the COVID-19 virus **it is extremely important** to ensure that they are referred to the local [Public Health Unit](#) or [Telehealth Ontario](#) so that they may be tested if necessary, diagnosed and closely monitored. Public Health will monitor the patient until their case has been resolved and there is no indication that the virus is present.

COVID-19 symptoms are very similar to the common flu and cold. Not every patient who is tested for COVID-19 will test positive. The Ontario Ministry of Health recommends every suspected case is tested out of an

⁸ Ontario Ministry of Health COVID Self-Assessment tab <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-self-assessment>

⁹ OMA Ontario Medical Association | Coronavirus: Summary of Guidance for Primary Care Providers in Community Based Settings | v1 January 31, 2020

¹⁰ [Patient Signs](#), [Visitor Signs](#), [Patient Information Sheet](#), [Handwashing Instructions](#)

¹¹ College of Homeopaths of Ontario Professional Practice Guideline #3 Inter-Professional Collaboration

abundance of caution¹². This testing helps ensure that patients are appropriately diagnosed and monitored. Patients can start by visiting the [Ministry of Health self-assessment website](#) to determine if testing is required.

Q11. Are there acceptable alternates to seeing patients in person?

Answer: Yes. You may conduct patient visits by phone or video conference. Types of video meetings which may work well for patient appointments include Facetime, Zoom or Skype (to name a few). CHO does not endorse any one video conference format. A key consideration in selecting a video conference supplier is to ensure that your patient's privacy is maintained.

Let patients know they can book virtual appointments. This message should be posted on your website, recorded on your clinic voice mail message, and posted at the entrance to the clinic.

In keeping with the [College's Record Keeping and Privacy of Information Professional Practice Guideline \(#1\)](#), the registrant must record these visits in the patient file and appointment book in the same manner she/he would if the patient attended in person.

Q12. If I maintain patient care using remote means, how do I dispense remedies?

Answer: Here are a few suggestions:

1. Maintain a drop box where remedies can be stored for patient pick-up without personal contact. The drop box should be cleanable with non-porous surface so that it can be wiped down and disinfected frequently. You may decide to use disposable gloves when handling the drop box. Remember to provide instructions for taking and handling the remedy.
2. Encourage patients to have a supply of typical remedies on-hand, which would allow them to draw from their remedy kit as per your instructions.
3. Provide patients with a list of two or three recommended local retailers which regularly stock remedies. Some remedies may be purchased directly from the supplier or third-party distributor and can be quickly shipped to the patient.
4. As required, remedies can be sent directly from your office and shipped by courier or mail.

Q13. What can homeopaths do to make a difference during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Homeopaths are well suited to dealing with epidemic disease. It is rooted in the history of homeopathic medicine. Educate your patients and the public about how to stay healthy during these unique and troubling times. Continue to take appointments (by phone or video is best) and treat your patients.

Treating patients remotely can help keep you and your patients safe. Care can be administered in a timely, efficient manner and reduce the risk of infection to the public, homeopaths and their families.

Q14. How does the College suggest that registrants communicate to their patients about COVID-19?

Answer: Communicate good homeopathy health practices, including the importance of maintaining wellness through good diet and nutrition, appropriate exercise, good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. These are critical messages for patients. In addition, during the pandemic patients should stay home, practice social distancing and limit physical contact unless necessary. If not feeling well, following return from travel or following contact with a COVID19 infected individual, patients should self-isolate¹³, self-monitor¹⁴, and maintain communication with their health care providers.

¹² Ontario Ministry of Health [Case Definition](#) Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) March 13, 2020

¹³ Public Health Ontario: How to self isolate <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/hcov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en>

¹⁴ Public Health Ontario: How to self monitor http://collegeofhomeopaths.com/uploads/1/2/4/8/124811910/covid_self-monitor_fact_sheet_en.pdf

Q15. Are there any red flags in communicating with patients about COVID-19?

Answer: Homeopaths treat patients who exhibit symptoms from a variety of acute illnesses including colds and flu. If the homeopath suspects COVID-19 infection, the homeopath can continue to treat the patient while encouraging them to contact the local [Public Health Unit](#) or [Telehealth Ontario](#) so that they may be tested, diagnosed and closely monitored. There is no known medical cure for COVID-19. Communication with patients and treatment of a patient must be delivered in a manner that does not confuse the patient or compromise the patient's overall care.

Q16. Can I provide my patients with remedies that act prophylactically or as a preventative for COVID-19?

Answer: If the patient consultation and repertorization points to the selection of a particular homeopathic remedy, it is proper to prescribe such a remedy. This remedy can be any appropriately selected remedy. The prescribed remedy is not an alternative to vaccination, and at no time may the homeopath imply that he or she is giving an alternative to vaccination. The best interests of the patient must always be paramount. Again, communication with patients and treatment of a patient must be delivered in a manner that does not confuse the patient or compromise the patient's care.

Q17. How can I best treat my patients while practicing within my professional scope of practice?

Answer: Treat your patients by prescribing appropriate remedies and adjunct therapies and monitor their care closely. Encourage patients to consult Public Health or Telehealth Ontario if you suspect they may have the Coronavirus or if they are in severe respiratory distress. If you must call 911 or an ambulance be sure to inform the operator that you suspect COVID-19 so that the ambulance workers are prepared and take the patient to the most appropriate hospital.

Patient Protection

Q18. What measures can homeopaths take to protect patients who choose to visit their clinic in person?

Answer: Patients who attend the homeopath's clinic for run-of-the-mill chronic or acute conditions and who do not display COVID-19-like-flu symptoms or have respiratory distress can attend the homeopath's clinic without special precautions other than social distancing.

Q19. What should I do if I believe I have seen one or more patients who have been confirmed to have the COVID-19 virus?

Answer: Self-care is important. If you have flu-like symptoms and have had close contact with someone who has or is suspected of having the virus, you should **call** your medical doctor or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or contact your [local public health unit](#). Inform them that you are a health care provider. If you are not feeling well, immediately stay home and self-isolate. Consult with a homeopath.

Public Health Reporting Requirements

Q20. Must I report patients to Public Health if I suspect they have COVID-19?

Answer: Yes. [Please refer to the Ministry of Health Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidance for Primary Care Providers in a Community Setting¹⁵](#). At this time, primary care providers are not expected to conduct testing for COVID-19. However, all primary care providers have a [duty to report¹⁶](#) a patient who has or may have COVID-19 to Public Health Ontario. COVID-19 infections can be reported to the PHO Communicable Disease Unit by email at cd@oahpp.ca. You may also call 647-260-7619 during regular business hours. For after-hours notification of public health officials please contact the Healthcare Provider Hotline toll free at 1-866-212-2272.

¹⁵ Version February 11, 2020. http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_primary_care_guidance.pdf

¹⁶ List of reportable diseases and contact information for Public Health Ontario. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/reportable-disease-contact.pdf?la=en>

Community Spread and Social Distancing

Q21. Should I worry about community spread?

Answer: As of March 17, 2020, there is some concern that community spread of the virus in Ontario may be occurring. Public health officials are watching this situation very carefully. To help “flatten the curve”^{17 18} and reduce the occurrence of community spread, the Federal and Provincial Governments and public health officials are encouraging individuals to practice social distancing and staying home when possible. The news on the pandemic changes day-by-day, hour-by-hour. For more information visit the [Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario](#) and/or the [World Health Organization](#) for daily updates.

Q22. What is social distancing?

Answer: Public health recommends that people engage in social distancing. In your office that means:

1. Adequate space in your waiting room so that there is least 2 meters between reception staff and patients, and patients or family members waiting in the waiting room.
2. Unless you must examine your patient, you should also use the 2-meter rule during your consultation.
3. Good hygiene practices including having alcohol rub available (to be most effective it should be 60% alcohol or greater) and put out signage encouraging patients and visitors to use it.
4. Make masks available for those who are experiencing flu like symptoms.
5. Maintain a one-way flow for patients and for staff.
6. Post clear signage for symptoms and action steps.
7. Family members should wait outside of the waiting room to prevent overcrowding.

Q23. How does the college recommend registrants incorporate social distancing into their practice?

Answer: Where possible this should be maintained in your waiting room and your exam and consultation rooms.

Handwashing, Personal Protective Equipment, Cleaning & Disinfecting

Q24. What are the guidelines for proper hand washing?¹⁹

Frequent and properly hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs. [Public Health Ontario](#)²⁰ recommends the following:

- Wet hands with warm water and apply soap.
- Lather soap and rub hands palm to palm, back of hand to palm, and in between and around fingers/thumbs.
- Wash for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse thoroughly under running water.
- Pat hands dry with a paper towel.
- Turn off water using the paper towel.
- Using hand sanitizer to wash your hands if soap and water aren't available.

¹⁷ To epidemiologists the [shape of the curve](#) reflects the source of the outbreak. The curve would vary based on whether there was a single common source like contaminated food (where there's traditionally a sharp rise with a rapid decline that's less abrupt than the rise) or [multiple sources of infection](#) like sick people out in the general public (with a slower, progressive rise in cases). Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/covid-19-china-epicurve-1.5479983>

¹⁸ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html>

¹⁹ Source: Ontario Medical Association <https://www.virusfacts.ca/>

²⁰ <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/health-topics/infection-prevention-control/hand-hygiene>

Q25. Will a face mask protect me or my patient?²¹

Answer: There is no reason to wear a facemask if you are well. Masks do not generally prevent healthy people from becoming ill. The best way to protect yourself is to wash your hands often. If you have symptoms of a viral illness, then wearing a facemask can help reduce the risk of transmitting it.

Only wear a mask if you are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (especially sneezing or coughing) or if you are in close contact and caring for someone who may have COVID-19. Disposable face mask can only be used once. If you are not ill or looking after someone who is ill then you are wasting a mask. There is a world-wide shortage of masks, so WHO urges people to use masks wisely.

WHO advises rational use of medical masks to avoid unnecessary wastage of precious resources and mis-use of masks (see Advice on the use of masks²²).

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue and maintain a distance of at least 2 meters ²³(6 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing. Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. If you wear a mask, then you must know how to use it, remove it and dispose of it properly.

Q26. Should I wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when I see patients in my clinic?

Answer: Based on what we know today, aside from wearing a face mask only if warranted (see previous answer) and practicing safe hygiene measures there is no need for other PPE in a homeopathic practice.

Q27. What are my requirements to clean my clinic following an appointment by a patient with a severe respiratory infection? What types of cleaning products are acceptable?

Answer: For the care and safety of your patients, staff, self and family (if you have a home-based clinic) it is important to regularly clean the most touched surfaces in your clinic. (i.e. door handles, push plates, countertops, bathrooms, reception areas, chairs, consultation and examination rooms.) Regularly means at least two times a day or more.

What you should know

- Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
- Frequently touched surfaces are most likely to be contaminated.
- Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
- Check the expiry date of products you use and always follow manufacturer's instructions.

²¹ Source: World Health Organization General Questions and Answers <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

²² <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

²³ WHO recommends 1 meter of distance between individuals, however, Public Health Agency of Canada as recently as March 14, 2020 moved to the recommend the model of social distancing at a distance of 2 meters (6 feet). <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html>

For more information please refer to the Public Health Ontario [Factsheet on Cleaning and Disinfecting in Public Settings](#)²⁴. Also refer to the College's Professional Practice [Guideline #6 on Infection Control](#)²⁵ which is geared towards a homeopathic practice.

Q28. What should I do to protect myself and my family? ²⁶

Answer: You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands. To be most effective alcohol rub should be 60% alcohol or greater.

- Maintain at least 2 meters (6 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

Why? When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

- Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots (cities or local areas where COVID-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease.

Why? You have a higher chance of catching COVID-19 in one of these areas.

- The World Health Organization has a series of excellent resources to help keep the public healthy. [Click here to see their public resource page](#)²⁷.

How to get more information

Q29. Where can I get more information about practicing in the context of COVID-19?

Answer: The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) has the following resources for health care professionals, and encourages you to learn how to protect yourself and your patients by reading their [guidance documents](#) and learning about:

- screening
- laboratory testing
- treatment recommendations
- occupational health & safety and infection prevention & control measures

²⁴ PHO Factsheet on Cleaning and Disinfecting in Public Settings <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en>

²⁵ CHO Professional Practice Guideline #6 Infection Control. http://collegeofhomeopaths.com/uploads/1/2/4/8/124811910/guideline_6_infection_control.pdf

²⁶ Source: World Health Organization General Questions and Answers <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

²⁷ Source: World Health Organization Advice for Public <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Health workers and health sector employers can call the **Healthcare Provider Hotline** for more information Toll free: 1-866-212-2272

Q30. Where can I find more information about COVID-19?

Answer: Information about the virus and outbreak are changing on an hour-to-hour and day-to-day basis. Please use the provided links and visit the **Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario** or the **World Health Organization** for daily updates. The College has links to a large number of resources on its **website** which are updated on a periodic basis. Additionally, CHO will notify registrants when new resources and information of critical importance become available.

