

Date:	April 9, 2020
To:	All Staff and Physicians (specific to acute care areas treating pediatric patients)
From:	Jennifer Begg, Executive Lead, Child and Youth Health Program; Dr. Kirsten Miller, Medical Lead, Child and Youth Health Program; Kelly Gunn, VP Primary & Community Care and Chief Nursing Executive
CC:	Penny Anguish, NI COO; Northern Health COVID Operational Lead; Angela De Smit, NE COO; Ciro Panessa, NW COO; Dr Ronald Chapman, VP Medicine; Medical Directors, NH EOC
Re:	COVID-19 in Children - Clinical Guidance and Family Resources

Issue:

To provide clinical guidance on caring for children with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 and resources for families of children with medical complexity and immune suppression.

Background:

At this time our pediatric populations are being managed using:

- For Acute Care delivery services
 - [Hospital and critical care](#) BCCDC clinical guidance
 - [NH Hospital Outbreak Preparedness Assessment Tool for COVID-19](#)
- For Community Services (pediatric care)
 - [Primary Care](#) clinical guidance
 - [Clinical Response Guidelines for COVID-19 in an outpatient setting \(primary care clinics, private medical offices, urgent and primary care centres and Northern Health Clinics\)](#)

A Provincial Clinical Reference Group has now provided guidance on COVID-19 in children including infection prevention and control, diagnosis and treatment options. This is now available on the BCCDC webpage along with resources for families of children with medical complexity and immune suppression.

Clinical Guidance:

- Refer to provincial guidance available through BCCDC webpage: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/clinical-care/pediatrics>
- Information linked on [Coronavirus page on OurNH](#) and [Child Health BC](#)
- Applicable for primary care providers and pediatricians, pediatric nurses and nurses working in acute care areas providing care to pediatric patients.

Recommendations:

All pediatric populations should be advised to avoid coming to health care facilities unless absolutely necessary. Children are presenting with generally mild symptoms. However, children with mild or absent symptoms who are positive for the virus are still able to transmit the virus to others.

Presentation of Suspected/Confirmed Pediatric COVID-19 Cases

- Signs and symptoms may include: fever, new onset/exacerbation of chronic cough, pneumonia, diarrhea, nausea.
- Pediatric patients can present with minimal or no symptoms and still test positive for the virus; placing close contacts at risk.
- All children who are admitted with fever should be managed with COVID-19 precautions until they are found to be definitively negative for COVID-19.
- To date children have rarely presented with severe symptoms; although children with chronic comorbid conditions may be at increased risk.
- As of March 30, within Canada, 4% of COVID-19 cases have been in children or youth less than 19 years of age. Five of these cases have led to hospitalization with one ICU admission.

Care of Suspected /Confirmed Pediatric COVID-19 Cases

- Where possible try to place patient in a negative pressure room; otherwise place in a single room that minimizes exposure to healthcare workers and other patients. Pediatric patients are limited to essential visitors only.
- Avoid the use of aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMP) i.e. choose metered dose inhalers (MDI) instead of nebulized therapy. In the rare occasion this cannot be avoided, ensure appropriate PPE is being utilized to include airborne precautions.
- Children have been shown to exhibit viral shedding for longer periods of time than adults. Precautions should continue for a minimum of 10 days from symptom onset and until the child is symptom free.
- There has been some preliminary evidence of possible fecal shedding of the virus in the pediatric population. When caring for a pediatric patient with suspected/confirmed COVID-19 all caregivers should wear gloves and practice good hand hygiene when changing diapers, or assisting with toileting. Ensure toilets are covered prior to flushing.

COVID-19 Pediatric Resources

- [Canadian Pediatric Society COVID-19 Resources](#) provides a wide variety of information and resources for pediatricians, children and families.
- [BCCDC: Pediatric Clinical Guidance for COVID-19](#)
- [WHO interim guidance for the management of pediatric patients with Severe Acute Respiratory Infection with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.](#)
- [Clinical management of patients with moderate to severe COVID-19 - Interim guidance](#)
- BCCDC: [General Patient Handouts for COVID - 19](#); [COVID-19 Information for Families of Children with Medical Complexity](#) and [Children with Immune Suppression](#)

For more information, please contact:

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