



COVID-19 INFORMATION BULLETIN – FALL 2020

INTRODUCTION

SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes the disease COVID-19, continues to be a serious health risk to the Canadian population. We have had 140,000 total cases and nearing 9,000 active cases in Canada, and sadly we are closing in on approximately 10,000 deaths. Globally there have been 30 million cases and nearly 1,000,000 deaths worldwide. As most epidemiological modelling studies predicted, many areas in Canada are now experiencing the anticipated “second wave” of infection. Many countries around the world are also experiencing a significant increase in the incidence of COVID-19. This is a result of government decisions to re-open parts of the economy, permit schools to re-open, and non-adherence to simple distancing measures from some segments of the population. In the early months of COVID-19, it was our long-term care facilities which experienced the greatest burden of disease. However, recently there is an increasing number of community acquired infections occurring in younger people. In an attempt to slow the number of individuals becoming infected, public health has advised provincial governments to place further restrictions on social gatherings.

RISK

COVID-19 is a contagious disease, spread primarily by droplets/aerosolized virus from an infected person. Personal risk of contracting COVID-19, and severity of illness experienced is quite variable, and determined primarily by age and comorbid illness. While it is true that our senior population is at greater risk, the young and healthy are not immune from potential long-term heart and lung complications. In severe cases COVID-19 can result in death. Situations that would place an individual at higher risk for contracting Covid-19 include: spending time in closed crowded places with poor ventilation, extended close personal contacts outside the “bubble”, certain occupations, travel, and touching contaminated surfaces such as swimming equipment. Of note, there are no reports of COVID-19 being transmitted through food itself, however eating indoors at restaurants remains a higher risk activity.

MEASURES TO REDUCE RISK

- Keep practicing physical distancing – 2 meters minimum
- Wear a mask in at risk situations i.e. public transportation, indoor meetings, shopping
- Reduce non-essential travel
- Avoid crowded poorly ventilated places
- Stay home if feeling unwell- report and get tested.
- Follow local public health advice
- Clean/ disinfect high touch surfaces regularly
- Keep up with hand washing/sanitizing often



SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of COVID-19 can vary from person to person. Symptoms may also vary in different age groups. Some of the more commonly reported symptoms include:

- new or worsening cough
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- temperature equal to or over 38°C
- feeling feverish
- chills
- fatigue or weakness
- muscle or body aches
- new loss of smell or taste
- headache
- gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting)
- feeling very unwell

Children have been more commonly reported to have abdominal symptoms, and skin changes or rashes. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19.

Evidence indicates that the virus can be transmitted to others from someone who is infected but not showing symptoms. This includes people who:

- have not yet developed symptoms (pre-symptomatic)
- never develop symptoms (asymptomatic)

While experts know that these kinds of transmissions are happening among those in close contact or in close physical settings, it is not known to what extent. This means it is extremely important to follow the proven preventative measures at all times.

TREATMENT and VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

There are several potential medications and vaccines being investigated in Canada to treat COVID-19. These include antiviral drugs, steroids, vaccines, anti-malarial medication, convalescent plasma from previously infected patients etc. Foremost has been the timing and availability of an efficacious and safe COVID-19 vaccine. There are a number of potential vaccines currently in phase 3 trials. Early data suggests efficacy in the development of protective antibodies, however it will take longer to develop safety profiles of these vaccines. Most infectious disease experts believe that one or more vaccines will be available by the Spring/Summer 2021.

CLOSING REMARKS

Pandemics aren't easy. We are learning together as COVID-19 continues to part of our lives for the foreseeable future. Most of us have not experienced this degree of threat to our physical and mental health. Goals, routines, and social activities have been altered, but only in the short term, so be patient and flexible, this will not last forever. Be mindful of how you are feeling and reach out if you are struggling. Thus far athletes, coaches, and support staff have done an excellent job



returning to training in a responsible and safe manner. Version 3 of Swimming Canada's COVID-19 Return to Swimming Document will soon be released and can be found on the Swim Canada website.

Finally, please consider receiving the annual influenza vaccine this fall when it becomes available, typically by October in most areas. I would also recommend downloading the free federal government COVID Alert app. It can help break the cycle of infection by letting people know of possible exposures before any symptoms appear.

Keep up the great effort and stay safe.

Dr. Steve Keeler
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