

Recommendations for Cohorting during Pandemic in Emergency Departments/Urgent Care Centers AHS Facilities

If you have any questions or comments regarding this Information Sheet contact Infection Prevention & Control at ipcsurvstdadmin@ahs.ca.

During pandemics, symptom-based cohorting may be required in Emergency Departments (ED) and Urgent Care Centers (UCC) when the need for private rooms exceeds capacity. Facilities should identify their capacity for isolation and potential cohorting spaces. Follow [IPC recommendations](#). Contact local Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) personnel for guidance as required.

Patients exhibiting influenza-like illness (ILI) symptoms should immediately perform hand hygiene and don a procedure mask. As soon as possible, direct patients to a dedicated space. Patients should be separated based on exposure-risk or confirmed epidemiological link to new or emerging pathogens. When an emerging virus is circulating widely it is reasonable to cohort all ILI+ patients together.

Communicable disease screening embedded in routine triage protocols should occur for all presenting patients. For up-to-date pre-triage/triage screening criteria and info, go to [COVID-19](#). Patients requiring **airborne** precautions are not candidates for cohorting.

Recommendations for Cohorting Spaces

- Ensure IPC point-of-care-risk assessment, hand hygiene, appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and appropriate environmental cleaning guidelines are followed.
- Use signage to identify area, restrict entry and inform about [additional precautions](#) required.
- Remove all non-essential equipment and furniture. Ensure all remaining items are cleanable. Refer to IPC [Enhanced Environmental Cleaning during COVID-19](#) and [RTU disinfectant wipes](#).
- Use disposable patient equipment when possible. Dedicate re-usable equipment for single patient use or clean and disinfect between patients.
- Provide Alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) and masks for patient use.
- Cleaning will be done as per Environmental Service protocols.
- Evaluate the continued need for designated cohorting spaces on a daily basis, to be discontinued as soon as capacity allows.

Recommendations for Cohorting Patients

- Separate patients by at least two meters or with a physical barrier.
- Instruct patients to perform hand hygiene and keep mask on ([mask poster/brochure](#)).
- Follow COVID-19 [Visitor Guidance](#). Do not perform Aerosol-generating Medical Procedures (AGMP) in shared locations.

Resources

For information on communicable diseases, visit [AHS IPC Acute Care Resource Manual](#) on the IPC Resource Manuals page.

Recommendations for Cohorting during Pandemic ED/UCC AHS Facilities | 2

References

1. Guidelines for Cohorting Isolation Patients in AHS Facilities:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-ipc-cohorting-isolation-patients.pdf>
2. Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings: http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/aspc-phac/HP40-83-2013-eng.pdf
3. Resource: Guidelines for Cohorting Patients with COVID-19:
<https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-ahs-cohorting-pt-covid-19-resource.pdf>
4. Directive: Guidelines for Cohorting Patients with COVID-19:
<https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-ahs-cohorting-pt-covid-19-hcs-254-01.pdf>