

**Date:** June 2, 2021

**To:** All ZEOCs and Zone Operational Leads

**From:** AHS ECC Acute Care Node

**Cc:** AHS Infection Prevention and Control

**Re:** **Revised Temporary COVID-19 Risk Factor – COVID-19 High Prevalence Areas**

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The revisions in the memo are marked **UPDATED**.

Extremely high COVID-19 activity in several areas of the province must be considered when working to minimize patient-related COVID-19 exposure or transmission events in hospital. As a result, a **temporary** new risk factor is being introduced as part of the initial patient COVID-19 symptom and risk factor assessment:

- **UPDATED** Any individual who resides in or has returned from an area with an extremely high prevalence of COVID-19 in the previous 14 days. This currently involves:
  - The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo including the City of Fort McMurray
- This includes community, work camps, hospitals, continuing care, and other congregate facilities/settings.
- **UPDATED** The following areas are no longer considered to be COVID-19 high prevalence areas:
  - Lac La Biche County

No patient who requires any health care services will be turned away due to exposure to a COVID-19 high prevalence area. The purpose of this temporary change is to prevent hospital transmission and outbreaks related to transmission from pre-symptomatic patients who are not aware they are incubating COVID-19. All COVID-19 preventative measures should be observed for these patients including use of continuous masking and eye protection by HCWs, continuous masking by pts. where required, hand hygiene by patients and staff, and additional PPE if indicated by the point of care risk assessment.

#### **What does this mean?**

- This temporary geographic risk factor applies to any patient being admitted to hospital via the Emergency Department, Day Surgery, or Obstetrical Assessment, or being transferred in from an impacted area. Zones and sites may include Ambulatory Care for simplicity and consistency at site entrance screening. (Note that Day Surgery is not considered to be an Ambulatory Care area for the purposes of this risk factor.)
- Impacted patients are to be placed on Contact and Droplet precautions for 14 days since their last exposure to the impacted geographic area (or to any other COVID-19 risk), similar to other COVID-19 risk factors.
- As with all acute care patients, COVID-19 testing is based on symptoms unless directed otherwise by IPC or Public Health.

- Urgent, emergent, and oncologic surgeries will proceed using any additional measures as indicated by patient symptom and risk factor screening. Scheduled surgeries for impacted patients should not be rescheduled specifically due to geographic location, but careful evaluation for other COVID-19 risk factors must continue according to existing protocols.
- Any required cohorting decisions are to be made collaboratively between IPC and Site Operations/Leadership.
- **UPDATED** This risk factor will not be added to healthcare worker (HCW) Fit for Work screening or the Designated Support Person risk factor screening. It is intended for patient screening only.
  - **UPDATED** Obstetrics patients admitted from a high prevalence area should be considered DSPs for the purpose of NICU visits to see their infant.

Please note the following:

- For the purposes of this process, AHS is adopting a definition of “high prevalence COVID-19 area” as a municipality with a high burden of active cases, including an active case rate greater than 1,000 cases per 100,000 population in the last 14 days. Additional areas may be added as required.
  - High prevalence areas will remain as a COVID-19 risk factor for at least 14 days and will be re-assessed regularly by the Acute Care Node in collaboration with IPC. The high prevalence area designation will be removed when an area has a sustained decrease to fewer than 1,000 active cases per 100,000 population for 7 or more consecutive days. Areas involved may change as guided by the local epidemiology.
  - **UPDATED** These memos will be updated weekly to ensure that the high prevalence area list is as current as possible.
- Patient-related forms and tools that contain the COVID-19 risk factor assessment will not be updated as the geographical risk factor will be temporary for high prevalence areas.
- **UPDATED** The geographic risk factor does not apply to Fit for Work screening for Health Care Workers (HCWs). However, with the general increase of COVID-19 activity in the community, HCWs should have heightened vigilance regarding adherence to public health measures both at work and outside of work. Fit for Work screening is required before going to work, and HCWs should be cognizant of their personal COVID-19 risk factors.

Thank you for your ongoing collaboration and support. Please contact your local Site Command Post or Zone Emergency Operations Centre with any questions.