

COVID-19 UPDATE

Keeping You Safe



To: All Staff, Professional Staff, Learners, Volunteers and Regional Hospitals

From: Jennifer Wintermans, EVP, Communications & Corporate Relations, COVID-19 Lead and Dr. William Harris, Interim EVP, Medical Affairs

Date: December 22, 2021

RE: **Mandatory Pre-Surgery/Procedure COVID-19 Screening and Testing**

The health and safety of all staff, professional staff, patients, the community and region is Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre's utmost priority.

In response to the increase in cases of COVID-19 in our community and across the province, as well as the growing threat of the Omicron variant, our Hospital has moved its Internal COVID-19 Pandemic Response Level to Orange (Restrict). As a result, we will be returning to pre-surgery/procedure COVID-19 testing.

Effective December 27, 2021, all patients, regardless of vaccination status, booked for surgery or a procedure as listed below will be required to have a COVID-19 PCR swab completed, to ensure testing results are available prior to their scheduled procedure. COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Testing results will not be accepted.

The Preadmission Clinic (PAC) will complete COVID-19 PCR testing 1-5 days prior to the following procedures and treatments:

- Procedures requiring general/local/spinal anesthesia;
- Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) patients, if not swabbed in the previous week;
- Patients requiring Pulmonary Function Testing (PFT);
- Upper GI endoscopy, bronchoscopy and procedures using high speed devices in the mouth or respiratory tract;
- Patients from Thunder Bay going elsewhere in Northern Ontario to have their surgery.

The PAC will endeavor to arrange appointments for PCR testing for all patients coming from the region. Patients who will not be able to attend the PAC within the appropriate time frame will need to have a swab completed through a registered hospital site in their home community.

Once the PCR swab is completed, the patient will be required to self-isolate until the day of surgery or as otherwise notified.

Please ask patients to report any new COVID-19 related symptoms to their Surgeon's Office immediately, up to and including the day of their procedure.

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The Emergency Department or Inpatient unit will complete COVID-19 PCR testing for admitted patients awaiting a Surgical or Endoscopic procedure.

In the interim, please ensure that proper PPE protocol is being followed in the presence of any Aerosol Generating Medical Procedure (AGMP). This includes the proper use of N95 masks and protective eyewear. The use of enhanced PPE (PAPR's etc.) should also be reviewed at this time for use in high risk or known COVID-19 positive patients.

All support documents and resources, including the [AGMP Guidance Document](#), can be found at <https://comms.tbrhsc.net/covid-19-information/>

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation and commitment to patient and staff safety.