

2023-24 Respiratory Illness Season

Preventing the Spread of Respiratory Viruses in Patient Care Areas of Your Clinic

Information current as of September 15, 2023, updates anticipated in the coming weeks.

OCFP's [IPAC resource](#) (July, 2023) contains more information on office flow, masking, PPE and more.

Screening

- Screen all patients for symptoms of respiratory illness.
- Screen patients passively with signage.
- Screen actively with questions on the phone or web-based booking system (see OCFP tool [Screening for Respiratory Illness Symptoms](#) developed to help your appointment booking staff).
- Screen again when patients present to the clinic.

Masking

If you are not requiring universal masking, ensure patients with respiratory symptoms and their accompanying caregivers are required to wear masks. When rates of respiratory illness increase, return to a universal masking policy where they have been stopped.

See here for OCFP's printable "[Reminder to wear mask](#)" signs.

Scheduling and Clinic Flow

- Where possible, schedule symptomatic patients separately from other clinic patients—at the beginning or the end of the day.
- Separate patients who have respiratory symptoms from others in your space.
- Do not cohort patients who have respiratory symptoms together unless they live in the same household.
- Continue to facilitate physical distancing in patient areas as much as possible.
- Stagger in-person and virtual appointments to enable room cleaning and to minimize time patients spend in the waiting room/ shared spaces.
- Reduce non-essential items in patient areas.

PPE and RATs

- Assess inventory of PPE resources to support staffing needs: masks, gloves and hand sanitizer.
- Consider stocking rapid antigen tests (RATs) in your clinic to allow on-site testing.
 - Order RATs through existing channels. If not yet enrolled in Provincial Antigen Testing Program (PASP), enroll through the [Ontario Together Portal](#), and order via the [PPE Supply Portal](#).
 - Individuals can access [RATs at Public Health Units and participating pharmacies](#).

Additional Resources

OMA has updated their guide to [Safely Providing In-Person Care](#) (member login required)
Centre for Effective Practice resource [Primary Care Operations in the COVID-19 Context](#)