

What to Expect When First Positive Case of COVID-19 is Confirmed in our Communities

Given the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) around the world, and more recently in Thunder Bay and the District, there is a great likelihood that a positive case of COVID-19 will be confirmed in Terrace Bay, Schreiber or Pays Plat in the coming days or weeks.

The North Shore Family Health Team (NSFHT), Aguasabon Medical Clinic, J.E. Stokes Medical Clinic and North of Superior Healthcare Group - McCausland Hospital (NOSH) recognize that this news will cause concern and worry in our communities, so we want to take this opportunity to explain what will happen when the first positive case of COVID-19 is identified locally. This information may help ease your minds and answer some of your questions regarding your safety and the safety of others, as well as the preparedness of our local health system to manage patients who contract COVID-19.

First, we want to assure you that your local healthcare providers have been working tirelessly to prepare for the likely spread of COVID-19 in our communities and that we are confident in our ability to support not only the patients who test positive for COVID-19 and their families, but all the populations we serve.

The steps that will be taken when a positive case of COVID-19 is confirmed

Once a positive case is confirmed locally, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) will quickly inform the individual who tested positive for COVID-19. As we are all committed to keeping our communities updated with timely and accurate information of any local COVID-19 spread, the next step will be to notify our communities that we have had our first confirmed COVID-19 case using the following outlets: NSFHT's and NOSH's website and Facebook pages, CFNO radio, and the Terrace Bay Schreiber News. We will not be sharing any personal identifying information with the public.

At this time, the TBDHU will begin contact tracing. Contact tracing involves tracking down everyone who has been in close physical contact with the individual who tested positive for COVID-19 and letting them know that they may have contracted the virus. A close contact is defined as an individual who has been within 2 meters of the individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes (i.e. people who live in the same house, caregivers, healthcare providers, essential service providers, etc.).

All close contacts of the individual who tested positive for COVID-19 will be asked to self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days and will require testing if they develop any cold or flu-like symptoms (i.e. cough, runny nose, sore throat, fever, diarrhea).

During this time, your local healthcare providers will continue to share resources and educate our communities on how to stay safe and how to reduce the risk of being exposed to the virus.

What things will look like when COVID-19 is in our communities

Essentially, things will look the same. Community members will be expected to continue living their new "normal", just as they have been for the last few weeks. The same guidelines will apply and will continue to be strongly encouraged, including the following:

- **Maintaining physical/social distancing** (at least 2 meters away from others at all times).
- **Staying home as much as possible** (i.e. limiting trips to the grocery store or other essential services to once per week or less, working from home if able, avoiding travelling outside of our communities).

- **Self-isolating when appropriate** (i.e. if you have any cold or flu-like symptoms, if you are an older adult, or if you have underlying health conditions).

Continuing to follow these guidelines will limit the spread of the virus and will help keep our communities safe and healthy.

What NSFHT and NOSH have done to prepare for positive cases of COVID-19

NSFHT in conjunction with NOSH opened the Terrace Bay COVID-19 Assessment Centre on March 19th, 2020. This Assessment Centre allows more community members to be tested for COVID-19 while protecting the health and safety of patients, healthcare providers and other community members. In fact, all individuals who have any cold or flu-like symptoms are encouraged to call your local clinic at 824-2934 (Schreiber) or 825-3235 (Terrace Bay) and book an appointment to get screened for COVID-19. The sooner the first community case of COVID-19 is identified, the more control we will have over limiting the spread of the virus.

In preparation for a likely outbreak, the clinics and hospital have gathered and ordered personal protective equipment and other medical supplies. With the supplies currently available, we are confident that we are well prepared to handle the possible spread of the virus in the community.

Both the clinics and hospital are prepared to manage patients that have tested positive for COVID-19 locally. Mild cases of COVID-19 will be required to self-isolate at home and will have ongoing monitoring. Patients who experience more significant symptoms may require local hospitalization, while those with severe symptoms may need transfer to Thunder Bay Regional Health Care Centre. Both Superior North EMS, our land ambulance service provider and Thunder Bay Regional Health Science Centre, our regional hospital, have been planning and preparing to assist us with the transport and care of our citizens that may require their services in this pandemic.

A reminder to be kind and to support each other

Many heartwarming stories of people coming together in all parts of the world have surfaced in the media over the last few weeks. Perhaps you've even had the opportunity to witness some of the many acts of kindness and generosity that have happened in our community.

In difficult times, it's gestures like these that will keep our communities strong and connected.

We recognize that having a positive case of COVID-19 in our communities will be concerning and that it could lead to heightened stress, anxiety and worry. We assure you that it's normal to feel frightened and anxious at times like these. We also understand that dealing with these difficult emotions is not always easy and it can sometimes impact the way we treat others.

As things continue to be tough for many, we encourage you to remain respectful towards each other.

Everyone needs to take on these responsibilities and do everything they can to support our communities and prevent the spread of the virus, while maintaining civility, compassion and understanding. We are stronger together! Be well.

Northshore Family Health Team
North of Superior Healthcare Group - McCausland Hospital

J.E. Stokes Medical Centre
Aguasabon Medical Clinic