

Information on COVID-19 for Newcomers to Canada

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health values the wonderful contributions that newcomers to Canada make to our community. We understand that life in a new country can be challenging and overwhelming. These challenges may seem even more overwhelming during the pandemic. We hope that these questions and answers will help you keep yourself, and those you care about safe.

What happens if I test positive for COVID-19?

If you got tested for COVID-19 and receive a call from a public health case manager, it is important that you provide them with all of the information that they ask for.

You will not get in trouble for disclosing details and all the information you provide will be kept confidential.

In Canada, Public Health is bound by privacy legislation. Ontario has a law called the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPPA). This law means that any person who has access to personal health information must keep it private. This information will not be shared with any other parties – including immigration authorities.

If public health calls you to discuss COVID-19, they may ask you how many people live in your home, and how much money you make. The case manager will ask what your first language is and what you identify your race to be. This information is not collected to get you in trouble. This information is kept private and used to better understand who needs help in our communities. It also helps us know how we can help you.

What happens if public health tells me I am a high-risk contact of a person with COVID-19?

If you have received a letter or phone call from public health that says you are a high-risk contact, this means you have been in close contact with someone who has the virus. To keep yourself and others safe, you will need to follow the instructions as described by your case manager. This will include isolating from others in your household, not going to work or school and staying in isolation until it has been 14 days since your last exposure. This information is kept private and not shared with anyone else.

What happens if public health tells me I am a low-risk contact of a person with COVID-19?

If public health tells you that you are a low risk contact, you do not need to self-isolate. You need to pay attention for any symptoms of COVID-19, and to get tested if you become sick.

What if there is not enough space for me to isolate at home?

When possible, you will be asked to self isolate at home. If you need to share bathrooms or kitchens with other people, you will be asked to clean shared items in these spaces. Public health may also be able to supply you with a medical mask to help you isolate from others in your home. In unusual situations, we may be able to work with social services to help find somewhere else for you to isolate.

How much does it cost to get tested?

Getting tested for COVID-19 is free. Public health will get in contact with you if your results are positive. However, if you are feeling sick, or are told that you are a high-risk contact, you need to self isolate as directed, even after your negative test results.

Will I lose my job?

It is against the law for your employer to fire you or punish you for not coming to work if you are self-isolating due to COVID-19.

How can I pay my bills?

There are different options to help you pay for things you need while you are isolating. The federal government offers benefits to people who are self-isolating due to COVID-19 or if they are caregiving for someone who needs support.

What if I am in Canada and my visa is expired, or I am undocumented?

Public health will not ask you about your immigration status. We will work with you to develop a plan to self-isolate regardless of your status. Even if you tell public health your immigration status, this information will not be shared with anyone else – including the police.

Will I get in trouble if I state I have a large number of high-risk close contacts?

No. Public health understands there are circumstances where people do not are not able to limit close contacts. We also recognize that accidents happen. Regardless of your situation, we are here to help you.

What if I need medical attention while I am sick?

If you need medical attention, you can still get medical care. Requirements for self isolation allow you to go the hospital in an emergency. It is important that you do not go to a family doctor's office. If you are experiencing severe difficulty breathing, severe chest pain or have serious concern for your health, please go the nearest emergency department and tell them if you are close contact for known positive for COVID-19.

What happens if I do not tell public health who I have been in close contact with?

We need to know who you have been in contact with to help keep you, and those you care about, safe. Telling us who you have been in contact with helps us understand if these people might be at risk of COVID-19, and helps us stop the spread of the virus. We are so grateful for the work being done by newcomers who have continued essential work through the pandemic. We appreciate all that you have done so far to keep our community safe, and we at public health will work hard to keep you safe.

What if I need immigration related support?

Call Quinte Immigration Services and connect with one of their settlement. They can work with you to review what benefits you are eligible to receive from the government. They may also be able to connect you to other immigration related resources. You can reach them at 613-968-7723.

Thank you.

Public health thanks you for all that you have done to help take care of our community. We know many newcomers are not able to work from home and have provided essential services to all of us. We are filled with gratitude in how you continue to make our community a better place.