



Paramedic Chiefs
of Canada

Chefs Paramédics
du Canada

Paramedic Services Week

May 24-30, 2020

Pandemic: Paramedics on the Front Line

Activating 9-1-1 and Screening

During a health emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when you call 9-1-1 a communication specialist (call taker) may ask you (the caller) a few unique and more questions than usual. While this might seem unusual and/or unnecessary, it is critically important to gather this information in ensuring the health and safety of those responding to you, like PARAMEDICS.

Why do we ask what we ask?



Most of why we ask what we ask when you call 9-1-1 is in an effort to best prepare those who are responding to your needs. Asking specific COVID-19 screening questions while the paramedics are responding to you will help understand what you are experiencing and how to best prepare and protect the patient, family members and the paramedics when they arrive.

While utilizing a (COVID-19) screening tool may add 30-60 seconds to call taking, the questions are just as important as any other interrogation questions call takers may ask. Medical Control Communication Centers (dispatch) have implemented a number of necessary protocols to focus on specific calls related to shortness of breath and general illness complaints that may require these additional screening questions.

Depending on the answers to the questions asked, the call specialist may be able to provide callers options to other non-urgent Health Information or Advice Lines if they don't require urgent medical attention or transport to hospital.

Signs and Symptoms

Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19 may show 2-14 days after exposure. Severity of symptoms may range from mild to very severe and in many people they may have no symptoms at all. Some may not recognize their symptoms because they are similar to the cold or flu. It's important to recognize that transmission of the virus is possible even if you are not showing any symptoms and practicing social isolation, physical distancing and proper hand washing is the best way to mitigate transmission.

Regularly experienced symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Shortness of breath (not common in the common cold or flu)
- Cough (not common in the cold but can be present in the flu)
- Fever above 38 degrees Celsius (not common in the cold but can be present in the flu)
- Sore Throat (Sometimes evident in COVID-19 but most common in the cold)



Other symptoms are COVID-19 that are more typical in cold and flu:

- Fatigue
- Aches and Pain
- Runny nose or stuffy nose (rare)
- Headache

Children under 5 years of age may present with GI symptoms, such as:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting



Paramedic Screening

- Communication specialists are trained to screen for these symptoms when taking any 9-1-1 call, and if any questions are answered “YES”, they will advise the paramedics to put on specialized personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - This is to protect both YOU and the PARAMEDICS who arrive to HELP YOU.
- When Paramedics arrive please do not approach them immediately, give them a few moments to put on the necessary PPE.
- Paramedics may then screen you again upon contact. Screening may differ slightly from province to province but they all require the same thing from each person asked:
 - COMPLETE HONESTY to screening questions.
 - You will be given the same high standard of care whether you screen positive or negative.
- Please give the paramedics space while they go through their screening, it will only take a couple seconds and remember, it's for your safety as well.
 - There is NO EMERGENCY in a PANDEMIC.
- Some paramedic services have introduced infrared thermometers that can detect body temperature with no contact. This may be included in screening processes. Don't be alarmed if a small 'radar-looking gun-like' device in appearance is placed towards your forehead or forehead. This type of no-touch thermometer uses infrared light to measure.

Self-Assessment Screening

In some non-urgent situations, if you or family members are not sure if you should call 9-1-1, there are self-assessment tools to help you in your decision.

Self-assessment tools are developed to help determine whether you may need further assessment for COVID-19 testing by a healthcare provider or at a local collection centre. You can complete assessments for yourself, or on behalf of someone else. Taking a self-assessment doesn't mean you can't still call 9-1-1 anyway, it again might help your decision.

Older people and people with a weakened immune system or underlying medical conditions are considered at higher risk of severe disease.

Note that self-assessment tools are intended for COVID-19 only. Your symptoms may not be related to COVID-19 and could require you to seek medical attention. If you are uncertain and/or feel very sick, contact your family doctor/nurse practitioner or call local non-urgent health advice lines.

Contact Tracing

Contact tracing is a process that is used to identify, educate and monitor individuals who have had close contact with someone who is infected with a virus. These individuals are at a higher risk of becoming infected and sharing the virus with others. Contact tracing can help the individuals understand their risk and limit further spread of the virus.

It is important that whether or not you have the virus or not at any time, you ensure you keep track of where you have been, who you have been around and where. This will help if you eventually do get exposed and carry the virus without any early symptoms and help determine how to trace your steps.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: SELF-MONITORING, SELF-ISOLATION, AND ISOLATION FOR COVID-19

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19



FEVER



COUGH



DIFFICULTY BREATHING

SELF-MONITORING



You have:

- ▶ no symptoms
- AND
- ▶ a history of possible exposure to the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, in the last 14 days

SELF-MONITOR means to:



- ▶ **monitor yourself** for 14 days for one or more symptoms of COVID-19
- ▶ go about your day but **avoid crowded places** and increase your personal space from others, whenever possible

SELF-ISOLATION

You have:

- ▶ no symptoms
- AND
- ▶ a history of possible exposure to the novel coronavirus due to travel outside of Canada or close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19

SELF-ISOLATE means to:

- ▶ **stay at home** and monitor yourself for symptoms, even if mild, for 14 days
- ▶ **avoid contact with other people** to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community in the event you become symptomatic

ISOLATION

You have:

- ▶ symptoms, even if mild
- AND
- ▶ you have been **diagnosed with COVID-19** or are waiting for the results of a lab test for COVID-19

To be **ISOLATED** means to:

- ▶ **stay at home** until your Public Health Authority advises you that you are no longer at risk of spreading the virus to others
- ▶ **avoid contact with other people** to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community, particularly people at high risk of severe illness outcomes such as older adults or medically vulnerable people



You need to **self-monitor** if:

- ▶ you have reason to believe you have been **exposed to a person** with COVID-19



OR

- ▶ you are in **close contact** with older adults or medically vulnerable people

OR

- ▶ you have **been advised to self-monitor** for any other reason by your Public Health Authority

Self-isolate if:

- ▶ you have travelled **outside of Canada** within the last 14 days

OR

- ▶ your Public Health Authority has identified you as a **close contact** of someone diagnosed with COVID-19

You need to **isolate** if:

- ▶ you have been **diagnosed** with COVID-19

OR

- ▶ you are **waiting to hear the results** of a laboratory test for COVID-19

OR

- ▶ you have been **advised to isolate at home** for any other reason by your Public Health Authority



If you develop symptoms, **isolate yourself from others immediately** and contact your **Public Health Authority** as soon as possible

If you develop symptoms, even if mild, **stay home, avoid other people** and contact your **Public Health Authority** as soon as possible

If your symptoms get worse, immediately contact your healthcare provider or **Public Health Authority** and **follow their instructions**

WE CAN ALL DO OUR PART IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19. FOR MORE INFORMATION:

📞 1-833-784-4397

@ canada.ca/coronavirus

✉ phac.info.aspc@canada.ca