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News Release

For Immediate Release

Changes to COVID-19 case management to ensure continuity of health care

Iqaluit, Nunavut (January 6, 2022) – Nunavut Minister of Health John Main is announcing changes to COVID-19 case management to ensure Nunavummiut continue to have stable access to health services.

“As COVID-19 cases continue to rise across Nunavut, we must make necessary changes to protect the continuity of health services in our territory,” said Minister Main. “We fully expect that COVID-19 will be in all our communities over the next month as travellers return to Nunavut. With that in mind, and recognizing there is a staffing shortage, we must manage our resources to balance COVID-19 response with Nunavummiut’s access to other essential health care services.”

To ensure lab and health services are available for other necessary health needs, COVID-19 testing protocols will change, effective immediately. PCR (confirmatory) testing will now only be done to confirm COVID-19 is present in new communities, in high-risk settings such as Elders’ homes and other congregated facilities, and for those in critical service areas. In communities with active COVID-19, ID Now rapid tests will be used to identify the spread of the virus from one household to another.

Once COVID-19 is in a home with multiple residents, using symptomatic diagnosis, all members of the household with symptoms will be assumed to be COVID-19 positive and testing will not be required. In those cases, the household will be cleared of active COVID-19 and off isolation once everyone in the home has been asymptomatic for two to three days.

Additionally, those with COVID-19 symptoms are asked not to call or go to a health centre or hospital unless symptoms are severe, or it is an emergency. This will reduce the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks among health staff.

“These changes will mean that official COVID-19 case counts in the territory will no longer reflect the total number of infections in our communities,” said Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Michael Patterson. “This necessary change will reduce the risk that our health system will be overwhelmed, which will put Nunavummiut with other health conditions at risk. We have seen how fast Omicron spreads and it is essential that all Nunavummiut follow public health restrictions and isolate when told to. It is everyone’s responsibility to protect our communities.”

Premier P.J. Akeeagok, Minister of Human Resources Adam Arreak Lightstone and Dr. Patterson will hold a live update at 11 a.m. EDT on Thursday, January 6 about the Government of Nunavut’s on-going response to COVID-19. Tune in on the Legislative Assembly TV channel, at http://video.isilive.ca/nunavut/ or on radio in Iqaluit at 92.5FM.

Anyone who develops COVID-19 symptoms – runny nose, cough, sore throat, fever or difficulty breathing – should call the COVID hotline at 1-888-975-8601 between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. EDT.

COVID-19 vaccines are available to all Nunavummiut aged 5 and older. Boosters are available for anyone 18 years and older 4.5 months after their second dose. For those 12 to 17 years old, the booster is available six months after their second dose. Contact your health centre to make an appointment. For all the latest information and guidelines on COVID-19 in Nunavut, go to: https://www.gov.nu.ca/.

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