

Practice guidance for MRTs and ENPs during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction and purpose

The Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists (the College) regulates medical radiation technologists (MRTs) and electroneurophysiology technologists (ENPs) in the province of Alberta. The College's primary purpose is the protection of the public. The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented challenge to healthcare providers and society at large. The College recognizes the critical role that MRTs and ENPs play in the health and wellbeing of Albertans.

The purpose of this document is to provide members with guidance as they provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information in this document is in line with the latest information and guidelines from the Government of Alberta and provided under the directive of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH).

Guiding principles and assumptions

- All MRTs and ENPs will follow the directions (orders) provided by the CMOH.
- MRTs and ENPs employed by hospital and private community care clinics should comply with the policies/procedures of their employer and the CMOH.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must be used for the safe delivery of services.
- MRTs and ENPs must refer questions and patient care outside of their area of practice to appropriate healthcare provider(s).
- The information provided in this document is based on the CMOH orders currently in effect along with the College's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

Note: The College continues to consult with external stakeholders, including Alberta Health and the CMOH, and will adapt this directive based on expert recommendations.

This document is current as of the date of publication and reflects the rules and requirements for MRTs and ENPs. In the event of a discrepancy between this information and the directives of provincial public health authorities, the directives of the provincial public health authority take precedence.

Practice expectations

Regulated members are to continue to stay updated about the COVID-19 pandemic and communicate such updates to their patients where applicable. Alberta's information on COVID-19 can be found at alberta.ca/coronavirus. Members must continue to follow public health orders and promote physical distancing where possible, and where not, use appropriate PPE.

Any MRT or ENP who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 or has COVID-like symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat) must be in isolation. All non-essential travel outside Canada should be cancelled, as per the Government of Canada's travel advisory.

MRTs and ENPs should be aware of changes to the Employment Standards Code that allow full and part-time employees to take 14 days of job-protected leave if they are:

- Required to isolate, or
- Caring for a child or dependent adult who is required to isolate.

During this stressful time, social and mental health supports are available, and members are encouraged to access these resources.

Screening

Any member or patient who has travelled outside of Canada is required to self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days based on [Order 05-2020](#). If the member or patient exhibits symptoms during their isolation, the isolation period should be extended for an additional ten days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. Common symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, fever (over 38 C), shortness of breath, runny nose and sore throat. A full list of COVID-19 symptoms can be found at alberta.ca/coronavirus#symptoms.

Members should complete a screening for COVID-19 symptoms when they arrive at work and monitor their health throughout the day. If a member exhibits COVID-19 symptoms they **MUST NOT** be in the workplace; they should be sent home and complete the [COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Healthcare and Shelter Workers](#).

Patients should be screened:

- When scheduling appointments and when receiving reminders for scheduled appointments.
- Upon arrival for diagnostic and therapeutic services.
- During diagnostic and therapeutic services.
 - If a patient develops COVID-19 symptoms while at the clinic/department, they should be sent home.

Anyone accompanying a patient should also be screened and recorded.

If a patient has COVID-19 symptoms during screening, instruct them to complete the online [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) and follow any instructions from the tool. All surfaces and areas a symptomatic patient could have been in contact with should be cleaned and disinfected.

Patients who are symptomatic or asymptomatic should be provided appropriate PPE, and should wear a procedure/surgical mask throughout the provision of diagnostic and therapeutic services.

The [interim infection prevention and control \(IPC\) recommendations for COVID-19](#) for patients who are symptomatic are that staff implement contact and droplet precautions. For aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMP), place the patient in a private room with hard walls and a closed door.

Exceptions:

Where a symptomatic patient requires care that cannot be delayed, the MRT or ENP should do the following:

- Provide the patient with a surgical/procedure mask.
- Possibly require additional infection prevention control precautions (contact and droplet precautions) and PPE (eye protection, gloves and gowns) depending on the assessment and care that is needed.
- Clean thoroughly between patient appointments.

MRTs and ENPs should consider the following when screening patients¹:

- Provide patients with the correct information about safety and precautions currently being taken, including PPE, if required.
- Communicate empathetically and patiently with patients as they may need extra support and guidance.
- Provide clear instructions on how patients can contact and find the appropriate department.
- Provide clear instructions on how to wear PPE to the patient if two metres cannot be maintained between the patient and others.
- Let patients know that waiting rooms have been organized to ensure a safe distance between patients.
- Explain that staff at the clinic/hospital will be wearing PPE and may look unusual; there is no need for concern. It is mandatory for all staff during this time.
- Dedicate traffic patterns for immunocompromised patients, including patients undergoing chemotherapy who are returning for diagnostic and therapeutic services.

¹ [Canadian Association of Radiologists: Radiology Resumption of Clinical Services](#)

Regulated member or patient diagnosed with COVID-19

Contact tracing is integral to stopping the spread of COVID-19. If a member or patient is confirmed to have COVID-19, they will be contacted by a representative from Alberta Health Services (AHS), who will provide the necessary public health guidance. Records/contact lists will be requested for contact tracing and may be sought for up to two days before the individual became symptomatic.

Prevention of transmission of COVID-19

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is recognized as the single most important IPC practice to break the chain of transmission of infectious diseases, including respiratory illness such as COVID-19.

Hand hygiene can be accomplished by either washing hands with soap and water and then drying with a single-use cloth or paper towels or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be approved by Health Canada (DIN or NPN), with a final concentration of 60-80 per cent ethanol or 60-75 per cent isopropanol.

When hands are visibly soiled, they must be cleaned with soap and water as opposed to using alcohol-based hand rub.

A significant component of hand hygiene is not touching your face. In addition to proper hand hygiene, MRTs and ENPs must also avoid touching their face and practice respiratory etiquette by coughing or sneezing into their elbow or covering coughs and sneezes with a facial tissue and then disposing of the tissue immediately. When contact with the face or tissue is made, hand hygiene must occur before resuming any activities in the clinic environment.

MRTs and ENPs are expected to practice routine hand hygiene consistent with the World Health Organization's "5 Moments for Hand Hygiene":

- Before touching a patient
- Before clean/aseptic procedures
- After body fluid exposure or risk of body fluid exposure
- After touching a patient
- After touching a patient's surroundings or belongings

For more information on hand hygiene including posters and videos, visit the [AHS Education: Hand Hygiene](#) page.

Environment cleaning and disinfecting

Effectively cleaning and disinfecting the environment is crucial to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Cleaning refers to the removal of visible soil. Cleaning does not kill germs but is highly effective at removing them from a surface. Disinfecting refers to using a chemical to kill germs on a surface.

Cleaning uses water, detergents and friction to remove contaminants. Disinfection refers to chemicals used to kill microorganisms on the surface and is only effective if the disinfection process is done correctly and after the surface has been cleaned.

COVID-19 can be killed if you use the appropriate disinfectants. Use a disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a virucidal claim (efficacy against viruses). Health Canada has approved several hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers for use against COVID-19. Use Health Canada's [Hard Surface Disinfectants and Hand Sanitizers \(COVID-19\)](#) web page to look up the DIN of the product you are using or to find an approved product.

It is important to appropriately disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched by multiple people at least twice daily. Examples of high-touch areas are:

- Doorknobs/light switches
- Washrooms, sinks/faucets, hand sanitizer dispensers (wall and portable hand pump bottle)
- Treatment area counter tops/imaging equipment consoles/change room cubicle benches
- Secondary workspace desks/chairs
- Clipboards, pens, shared computers, telephones, intercoms, keyboards, mobile devices
- Staff areas (e.g., lunch rooms)
- Waiting room chairs/tables, entrance door (both sides)

All communal items that cannot be easily cleaned (such as magazines and toys) should be removed to reduce the spread of microorganisms through frequent contact. It is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions for difficult to clean items or consult with AHS Infection Prevention and Control. All IPC concerns, for all settings, are being addressed through the central intake email at continuingcare@albertahealthservices.ca.

Additionally, all healthcare equipment should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using cleaners and disinfectants that are compatible with the manufacturer's instructions for use. This includes equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers and lifts. Shared patient care equipment such as imaging equipment, ancillary imaging equipment, positioning aids and lead markers should be disinfected between uses or between patients. All staff equipment (computer carts/screens, carts, charting tables, telephones, touch screens) should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily and when visibly soiled. MRTs and ENPs should ensure that hand hygiene has been performed before touching any equipment.

Please see the following document for additional information:

- [COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities](#)

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

MRTs and ENPs must always wear a surgical or procedure mask continuously in all areas of the workplace if they:

- Are involved in direct patient care
- Cannot maintain adequate physical distancing (2 metres) from patients and staff, or
- Do not have a physical barrier in place to aid in physical distancing (e.g., plexiglass).

Mask use reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Full PPE, including N95 masks, is not routinely required unless performing aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMP). Follow the procedures on [donning and doffing of PPE](#) on the Alberta Health Services website.

For more information on appropriate PPE for healthcare services, please see the following resource:

- [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\): COVID-19](#)

Physical distancing

All members must continue to follow public health orders and promote physical distancing where possible, and where not, use appropriate PPE. MRTs and ENPs should, when possible:

- Maintain physical distancing of at least two metres in waiting rooms with clearly marked spaces and directional clues.
- Restrict the number of staff and patients in the setting at any one time.
- Maintain physical barriers between individuals such as staff and patients.

- Increase the separation between desks and workstations.
- Try to limit the number of people in shared spaces (such as staff rooms or lunch rooms) by staggering break periods, removing chairs from spaces and taping markers at two-metre intervals to support physical distancing.

For more information on reorganizing workplace settings, please see the following resource:

- [Canadian Association of Radiologists: Radiology Resumption of Clinical Services](#)

Conclusion

As the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, the College is taking action to uphold our mandate of protecting the public by supporting our members on the front lines of this unprecedented public health emergency.

MRTs and ENPs continue to be essential members of the healthcare team, and with this guidance document, members should have a clearer understanding of their practice expectation during the pandemic. Additional resources and references are provided that should allow members to feel equipped to ensure Albertans receive safe and competent care. If you have any questions about this document or wish to seek practice advice, please contact the College:

Phone: 780.487.6130

Toll free: 1.800.282.2165

Email: info@acmdtt.com

Resources

Hand Hygiene

- Hand Hygiene
 - ▶ canada.ca/en/public-health/services/healthy-living/hand-hygiene.html
- How to Use Alcohol-based Hand Rub
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-flu-hand-rub-how-to.pdf
- How to Hand Wash
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-ipc-flu-handwash-how-to.pdf
- AHS Education: Hand Hygiene
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page14955.aspx

Cleaning and disinfection

- List of Hand Sanitizers Authorized by Health Canada
 - ▶ canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/hand-sanitizer.html
- List of Disinfectants with Evidence for Use Against COVID-19
 - ▶ canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html
- COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-public-facilities.pdf

PPE

- AHS IPC Personal Protective Equipment Contact & Droplet: COVID-19 (Online Module)
 - ▶ ahamms01.https.internapcdn.net/ahamms01/Content/AHS_Website/modules/ipc/ipc-ppe-covid/story.html
- Donning and Doffing of PPE
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page6422.aspx
- Frequently Asked Questions about PPE
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-ppe-faq.pdf
- How to Wear a Mask
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-hcw-masks.pdf
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): COVID-19
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17048.aspx

Social and Mental Health

- Help in Tough Times
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx

Other

- Canadian Association of Radiologists: Radiology Resumption of Clinical Services
 - ▶ car.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CAR-Radiology-Resumption-of-Clinical-Services-Report_FINAL-2.pdf
- AHS Interim IPC Recommendations for COVID-19
 - ▶ albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipc-emerging-issues-ncov.pdf
- Alberta's Relaunch Strategy
 - ▶ alberta.ca/alberta-relaunch-strategy.aspx
- CMOH Order 05-2020: 2020 COVID-19 Response
 - ▶ open.alberta.ca/publications/cmoh-order-05-2020-2020-covid-19-response
- COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Healthcare and Shelter Workers
 - ▶ myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/HWAssessLanding.aspx
- COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool
 - ▶ myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx