

March 11, 2004

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Chief Executive Officers, Non-Acute Care Facilities  
Community-Based Health Care Providers

**FROM:** Allison J. Stuart, Director  
Emergency Management Unit  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

**RE:** Infection Control and Surveillance Standards and  
Guidelines for Febrile Respiratory Illness (FRI) in Non-  
Outbreak Conditions

---

In November 2003 the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) struck the Infection Control and Surveillance Standards Task Force to establish baseline provincial infection control and surveillance standards for febrile respiratory illness (FRI) in acute care hospitals (non-outbreak conditions). Since those standards were established in January 2004 the MOHLTC has convened two additional task forces to customize those standards for use in non-acute care facilities and community health care settings. The non-acute care facilities task force was chaired by Dr. Bonnie Henry, Associate Medical Officer of Health, City of Toronto, and the community health providers task force was chaired by Dr. David McKeown, Medical Officer of Health, Region of Peel Health Department.

The final reports from these task forces, *Preventing Respiratory Illness, Protecting Patients and Staff* provide recommendations for baseline standards and guidelines that build on Health Canada's *Infection Control Precautions for Respiratory Infections Transmitted by Large Droplet and Contact* (non-outbreak) and support a pan-Canadian approach to infection control. Provincial baseline standards for FRI infection control and surveillance in non-acute care facilities can be found on the ministry website at:  
[www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/pubhealth/sars/sars\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/pubhealth/sars/sars_mn.html). Each facility will need to review these standards against existing practices in their setting and make changes as required. These standards represent the **minimum** expectations of the MOHLTC for non-acute care facilities.

Provincial guidelines for *Preventing Respiratory Illness in Community Settings: Recommendations for Infection Control and Surveillance for Febrile Respiratory Illness (FRI) in Community Settings in Non-Outbreak Conditions* can be found on the ministry website at:  
[www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/pubhealth/sars/sars\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/pubhealth/sars/sars_mn.html).

Each community-based practice and clinic or diagnostic centre will need to review both these guidelines and the Health Canada guidelines against existing practices in their setting and make changes as appropriate to meet the requirements outlined in the guidelines. In addition, the health professional colleges have been asked to discuss with their members how to incorporate these expectations into clinical practice standards.

These standards and guidelines reflect our renewed awareness of the critical importance of basic infection control measures and the global threat posed by emerging infectious diseases. They also underscore the importance of collaborative approaches among all components of the health care system to enhance the safety of patients and staff.

If you have questions regarding implementation of these standards or guidelines, I urge you to contact internal and external resources such as infection control practitioners, facility health and safety committees and your local public health unit for assistance.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Infection Control Standards Task Forces for their vision, their commitment to patients and health care workers, and their invaluable advice.

*(Original signed by)*  
Allison J. Stuart