

Emergency Infection Control Kit

Questions & Answers

What is an Emergency Infection Control Kit?

The kit is a sealed box containing essential infection control products for droplet spread diseases. It is being distributed to all Community Health Centres, midwives and community-based physicians in Ontario. These kits are intended for large-scale infectious disease emergencies such as an influenza pandemic. They should only be opened in an emergency.

The letter says not to open the kit unless it is an emergency. How will I know if it is an emergency?

These kits are to ensure that your office has the capacity to protect you, your staff and patients during a health emergency. They are to be used in an emergency only and are not intended to replace the day-to-day infection control procedures and equipment used to protect patients and staff against febrile respiratory illnesses such as seasonal influenza.

A relevant health emergency includes *a significant infectious disease outbreak/epidemic in your community* which:

- causes a rapid depletion of your existing infection control supplies
- exceeds the surge capacity in supplies and equipment which you should routinely have in place
- disrupts supply chains in your region so that supplies can not be replenished rapidly enough to ensure your protection.

The primary goal of these infection control kits is preparedness for an influenza pandemic. However, you may also access the kit in the event that another health emergency meeting the above criteria arises. Please note that given the pandemic focus of this initiative, there is currently no ongoing replenishment strategy in place for non-pandemic use.

What is in the kit?

The kit contains the following:

- six bottles of hand sanitizer, 500 ear-loop procedure masks, 200 non-latex exam gloves, six pairs of protective (reusable) glasses, 20 disposable gowns and two canisters of surface sanitizer wipes
- communication materials for you to post in your office for your patients, as well as information fact sheets for your staff.

Who decided what is included in the kits?

The ministry consulted with representatives from the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, and the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. The items were chosen for their infection control properties, comfort, and ease-of-use to protect you, your staff and your patients from droplet spread infection.

Why don't the kits contain more items?

The kits are intended to be a first response initiative to protect you, your staff, and patients at the onset of a health emergency. Kits are designed to assist your office for the first seven-10 days, during which time more supplies should be available through your regular suppliers. In the case that supplies are unavailable or supply chains cease to function, supplies will be available through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

What happens in an emergency when I run out of supplies?

The ministry continues to review stockpiling options and processes to ensure that health care providers and facilities will have continued access to supplies. More details regarding planning for the central ministry stockpile will be available in the next edition of the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHPIP).

Please note that in the OHPIP, the ministry recommends that health care facilities maintain a one-month stockpile of essential supplies and equipment. While it is more difficult for smaller community clinics to achieve this, they should ensure that they routinely have enough personal protective equipment on hand to accommodate the demands in their practices, as well as some surge capacity. The ministry's centralized stockpiles are intended to supplement facility-level stockpiles only when they have been exhausted.

Why don't the kits contain N-95 respirators?

Current scientific advice states that procedure/surgical masks provide appropriate protection for droplets spread pathogens (such as influenza), rather than the N-95 respirators used in SARS. The Ministry of Labour supports the provision of procedure/surgical masks for droplet protection. The majority of international jurisdictions currently recommend surgical masks rather than N-95 respirators for an influenza pandemic.

Why are hospital settings not receiving these kits?

The ministry decided to provide frontline health care workers such as family physicians, physicians whose offices are outside of a hospital setting, and midwives with pre-existing emergency response capacity. Larger institutional settings such as hospitals and long-term care homes are easier to reach during an emergency than community offices. After their own resources are depleted, they will be provided for from a central ministry stockpile.

For more information:

Visit our website at www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic or call the Health Care Provider Hotline 1-866-212-2272. This phone line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.