Dear Patient,

Focus Medical would like to take this opportunity to touch base and review the “new normal” as it relates to our office procedures and your continued care.  Evidence and best practices are rapidly changing, and we will update and modify our policies accordingly.

This has been an extremely trying time for all, and we hope you and your loved ones are doing alright.  Please know that although things look a bit “different” than they did a year ago, our team at Focus Medical is committed to ensure you continue to receive timely, quality and compassionate care.

Some important changes to note:

1. In an attempt to reduce Covid transmission to you and our staff, our aim remains to minimize waiting room congestion and volume for non-essential visits.  Whenever possible, **virtual visits** will be utilized.  Please note that if you use our **on line booking** system (https://focus-medical.bookmd.ca/) ALL of these appointments will be **PHONE APPOINTMENTS**.  As many have noted in the past 6 months, this is often sufficient to address your queries.  During your phone appointment, if your doctor deems that an in-person appointment is indicated, that can then be arranged.  We ask patients to be mindful of our time and policies; as always, when an appointment is requested for a ‘non urgent’ reason, you will be scheduled appropriately.  Just because your appointment may be over the phone, it is not realistic to expect immediate appointments for non-acute problems. Further, “drop in” visits are not permitted; they are unsafe given Covid risk exposure and are disrespectful to our staff. Thank you for your understanding.
2. Masks are mandated for all patients in the office who are 2yrs of age and older.  If you have questions about how to proceed with your booking, you can email the office (info@focusmed.ca) or discuss with our front staff  (647-748-1881).  All office visitors are required to complete a [Covid screening questionnaire](https://4b1dd58a-10d6-490d-b238-768f44a530e8.filesusr.com/ugd/4efe57_daec1613d6ef44aebf3be79306f68ca3.pdf) prior to their visit
3. School/Work:   If you or your child have any symptoms that require them to stay home from regularly scheduled activities, we suggest you complete the [on-line Public Health screening questionnaire](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/) to see if Covid testing is appropriate.  We are fortunate in Toronto to have easy access to quick testing and results at [Covid assessment centres](https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-what-you-should-do/covid-19-have-symptoms-or-been-exposed/covid-19-assessment-centres); this resource should be used liberally.  In today’s climate, any [“minor” symptoms consistent with covid](https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-what-you-should-do/covid-19-have-symptoms-or-been-exposed/) should keep your child home.  We strongly suggest testing for Covid: the test results will be back in 24-48hrs. If the test is negative AND your child is symptom free for 24 hours without any medication, then they can safely return to school.  If you choose not to test, we encourage them to stay home for 14 days after onset of symptoms, AND a minimum of 24hrs being symptom free. Most cough/cold symptoms can safely be managed at home with fluids, rest +/- tylenol for healthy individuals (>1yr old) while awaiting the Covid result. If you are uncertain about your symptoms and it is after hours you can always consult the telephone health advisory service at 1-866-797-0000). If Covid testing is negative then you can discuss with your doctor the need for an in-person visit or next steps. Of course, if you feel an illness is severe or worrisome, the emergency room should be accessed.
4. Return to work/school notes/work modifications:  It is the Ontario Medical Association’s and Public Health’s position against requiring doctor’s notes to clear students and staff to return to school/work after illness.  This is not an appropriate use of physician resources during a time when the system is already strained.  If you request a note, please understand that, at most, your MD can provide written confirmation of your health status and entitlement to a safe work environment.   The decisions as to day-to-day employment activities or restrictions lies with the employer to interpret based on their own policies and to implement accommodations as THEY see fit.

To date, researchers have documented a few specific groups for whom more serious complications of illness if Covid 19 exist, if acquired.  We provide [this link](https://4b1dd58a-10d6-490d-b238-768f44a530e8.filesusr.com/ugd/4efe57_ef49a31b96614fa0ae17ebafc00ea8b3.pdf) that explains these conditions, for your reference.  There is much mis-information circulating about actual risk factors, so we encourage your review of [this document](https://4b1dd58a-10d6-490d-b238-768f44a530e8.filesusr.com/ugd/4efe57_ef49a31b96614fa0ae17ebafc00ea8b3.pdf).

1. Routine Care:  Rest assured that routine preventative health screening (mammograms, pap smears, colon cancer screening) and immunizations can and will continue.  In-person visits will be scheduled when needed (pap smears) but many other tests can be ordered virtually.   We encourage you to book a virtual phone call with your doctor if you would like to review what preventions are due.
2. Flu Shots:  this year, more than ever, we strongly encourage everyone over 6 months of age to receive their annual flu shot. Senior’s flu shots are available for those >65yrs old.  ALL flu shots WILL be available in pharmacies this year.  We do not yet know specifics of how our office will administer flu shots but, will post info on our website as soon as it become available.  In an effort to reduce office volume and time to clean between patients, we suggest patients receive their flu shots at their local pharmacy and notify our office when complete (info@focusmed.ca or 647-748-1881) so that we can update your file.

Please know that we are committed to supporting you and your loved ones during these difficult times.  Masking, social distancing, hand washing and looking out for one another remain the measures we can control and implement.

Thank you for your patience these past few months and to our incredible staff who work tirelessly to assist in patient care and keeping the office a safe place for all.

As many services are not supported by OHIP, we offer the option of paying the [annual fee](https://www.focusmed.ca/pay-a-bill).  In lieu of the annual fee, non-covered services will be individually billed according to the Ontario Medical Association guidelines.

Wishing all a healthy season ahead,

Drs. Glazer, Herman, Leneman and Stulberg