

December 17, 2020

## **ATTENTION: RPN'S**

A message from the College of Nurses of Ontario:

With the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines in Canada this week, we have released a statement to remind nurses of their professional accountabilities to support evidence-based public health prevention and protection measures, including vaccinations, masking, handwashing, and social distancing.

The CNO's statement on nurses supporting public health recommendations is below, or click on the link provided to visit the College of Nurses of Ontario website.

We are grateful for the important work you are doing in the healthcare system and acknowledge your leadership and dedication to supporting quality nursing practice and patient safety during these challenging and unprecedented times.

Have a safe and healthy holiday season.

Warm regards,

*Carol*

**Carol Timmings**  
Chief Quality Officer  
College of Nurses of Ontario | [cno.org](https://cno.org)

# Nurses supporting public health measures

Public health protection measures, such as handwashing, masking, and social distancing are effective strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19. With the imminent rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in Canada, CNO is taking this opportunity to make its expectations about providing advice on evidence-based public health protection and prevention measures clear to nurses in Ontario.

## CNO's statement

Nurses are leaders in the community and the public's trust in nurses may extend to their views on health matters communicated on social media and other forums. Statements made by nurses in public forums have the potential to impact the health and safety of the public.

Nurses have a professional accountability to:

- use accurate sources of information based in scientific theory and evidence, to inform their professional service and practice<sup>[1]</sup>
- support patients and the public to make informed health care decisions, including decisions about public health prevention and protection measures<sup>[2]</sup>
- role model and follow public health directives that keep patients and the public safe<sup>[3]</sup>.

CNO's expectations are outlined in the *Code of Conduct* and *Professional Standards*.

CNO's practice standards do not apply to all aspects of a nurse's private life. However, when a nurse communicates with the public and identifies as a nurse, they invoke their professional position as a nurse and are accountable to CNO and the public it protects.

Nurses are expected to adhere to the standards of practice in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Nurses have a professional responsibility to not publicly communicate anti-vaccination, anti-masking and anti-distancing statements that contradict the available scientific evidence. Doing so may result in an investigation by CNO, and disciplinary proceedings when warranted.