

**COVID-19
INFORMATION**

The Manitoba government is taking proactive measures to help reduce the impact of COVID-19. This includes:

- suspending services at licensed child-care centres, effective end-of-day Friday, March 20;
- recommending parents with children in these centres begin to make alternate arrangements as soon as possible, even though centres will remain open for the remainder of the week;
- continuing to allow home-based child-care providers to operate; and
- creating dedicated child-care options for front-line and essential services staff who need them; and
- closing all casinos effective midnight March 17.

Parents who will be providing front-line health care or are a member of a fire, police or paramedic service and will not be able to find alternative child care while services are suspended are asked to contact 204-945-0776 or 1-888-213-4754 (toll-free).

In keeping with social distancing strategies outlined to Manitobans and in consultation with key stakeholders, public health officials have advised suspending classes in Manitoba kindergarten to Grade 12 schools effective March 23 to April 10. This is being done to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Manitoba.

The province is also advising that teachers will continue to be on the job, either in schools or at home, to create learning plans and continue teaching using the distance learning options available.

Parents are asked to keep all children and youth home if they have a fever or other respiratory illness symptoms. Schools will be notifying parents that students will be sent home if they have any of these symptoms.

In addition, public health officials are recommending the cancellation of gatherings of more than 50 people, consistent with the announcement made by the federal government.

Public health officials are strongly advising all Manitobans, including health-care providers, to cancel or postpone any non-essential international travel. In addition, public health officials are recommending all international travellers should self-isolate and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after returning to Canada.

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Health officials are reminding physicians, health-care providers and support staff returning from international travel that they MUST self-identify to their organization/site's occupational health services.

To support social distancing efforts, Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living's registration and client services office at 300 Carlton St. will be temporarily closed to the public. Staff will continue to register people for Manitoba health coverage and Manitoba Pharmacare benefits through email, phone, fax and mail. Forms and contact information can be found at: www.gov.mb.ca/health/mhsip/forms.html.

Yesterday, Manitoba's Provincial Court, Court of Queen's Bench and Court of Appeals all introduced new provisions to restrict or reschedule matters over the next several weeks. For more information, visit www.manitobacourts.mb.ca/news/covid-19-update-march-16-2020/.

A new self-assessment tool is now online to help Manitobans determine whether they need to call Health Links–Info Santé to possibly get a referral for testing or to self-isolate. The tool provides interactive advice to users concerned about whether they have contracted COVID-19. It is expected the tool will help with call volumes. For more information, visit: www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

Additionally, people calling Health Links–Info Santé can soon expect to hear a new interactive voice response system (IVR). The IVR will allow COVID-19 screening questions to be answered prior to users being connected to operators, which should shorten the length of calls. This technology is anticipated to be up and running as soon as this afternoon.

Any person concerned about their exposure to or risk of having COVID-19 should call Health Links–Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or toll-free at 1-888-315-9257 before arriving at a testing site. Nearly 1,700 patients have visited dedicated testing sites in Winnipeg and Thompson in the past five days including 481 yesterday.

All Manitobans should continue to practice good social distancing strategies including minimizing prolonged (more than 10 minutes), close (less than two metres) contact between other individuals in public.

Work is underway to finalize guidelines for health-care and critical infrastructure workers who return from international travel to address any impacts on essential services. All physicians, health-care providers and support staff returning from international travel MUST self-identify to their organization or site's occupational health services.

Manitoba patients are advised their surgery may be postponed if their surgeon has determined their procedure can be safely delayed for three months or longer without any significant effects on their health. The goal is to protect patients who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Patients that will be affected by cancellations will include:

- patients older than 70 years of age;
- patients with significant underlying health conditions; and
- patients who are immune compromised.

Patients will be contacted directly to confirm that their surgery is being affected.

Only **one visitor per patient** at a time is allowed in acute care facilities, such as hospitals, across Manitoba. This does not apply to parents of children in hospital. Also, exceptions will be made for special circumstances, such as visitors who require an escort or those going to see a patient nearing the end of their life.

The Manitoba government and Doctors Manitoba have agreed on new payment options to offer virtual visit and virtual care psychotherapy options to supplement traditional models of care including video-conferencing options. Physicians will work with their patients to use these options.

Transportation industry partners need to ensure all companies are made aware of important considerations with respect to essential border crossings. At this time, public health officials are not mandating drivers to self-isolate after crossing the border to ensure essential services continue.

However, all companies should make sure drivers are not showing respiratory symptoms before crossing the border and take the necessary measures if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms. This includes calling Health-Links Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or toll-free at 1-888-315-9257 to speak to a health practitioner and requesting the affected driver to self-isolate until they are assessed.

Individuals in Winnipeg directed by Health Links–Info Santé to be tested for COVID-19 will be asked to visit a community screening location. The community screening locations include:

- Access Winnipeg West, 280 Booth Dr.;

- Access Fort Garry, 135 Plaza Dr.;
- Mount Carmel Clinic, 886 Main St.; and
- Access Transcona, 845 Regent Ave. W.

Testing at these sites will be available Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Those who require screening, assessment and/or testing after hours will be directed to urgent care sites and emergency departments.

Individuals in rural Manitoba directed by Health Links–Info Santé to be tested for COVID-19 will be asked to visit a community screening location. This includes:

- Thompson Clinic in the Plaza Mall, Thompson from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.;
- Channing Auditorium in the Flin Flon Community Hall, 2 North Ave., Flin Flon from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and
- Guy Hall, 28 First St. West, The Pas from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, all Manitobans have a role to play in slowing its spread and minimizing its impact on the health-care system and in communities.

Social distancing strategies for all Manitobans include:

- cancelling or postponing any large-scale events with more than 50 attendees;
- minimizing prolonged (more than 10 minutes), close (less than two metres) contact between other individuals in public;
- avoiding greetings that involve touching such as handshakes;
- disinfecting frequently used surfaces;
- following public health advice related to self-monitoring and self-isolation if you have travelled or have been exposed to someone ill with the virus; and
- considering avoiding travel, crowded places and events, especially if you are at higher risk.

Employers should review their business continuity plans and take steps to ensure employees can stay home when ill, without facing barriers such as the requirement for sick notes, and work from home if possible. Employers should also discontinue non-essential, work-related travel outside of Manitoba and encourage virtual meetings to reduce prolonged, close contact between individuals.

There have been reports of multiple phishing scams related to COVID-19. Many are asking people for credit card information to provide medication following positive test results. This is not a call that Manitobans would receive from public health officials. Manitobans are advised not to provide any financial data, hang up on the caller and to report the call to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at (toll-free) 1-888-495-8501.

People are encouraged to take common prevention measures including regular handwashing with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds. Make sure to dry hands thoroughly.

Alternatively, people can use an alcohol-based hand cleanser if their hands are not visibly dirty. People should also cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough or sneeze into their sleeve.

Being prepared also means seeking official sources of information to ensure the most up-to-date and accurate information is being used. Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living is also urging media to exercise caution in reporting information related to the evolving COVID-19 situation and to avoid hearsay or speculation, as this can spread misinformation.