



Regional Covid19 All-Staff Update

By Southern Health-Santé Sud
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1. Update by Medical Officer of Health

- The curve of COVID-19 cases will continue to increase and we expect it to do so for the next couple of weeks. The vast majority of Canadians with coronavirus (COVID-19) are mildly ill and recovering at home and during their 14-day period of isolation.
- The majority of deaths in Canada to date have been those above the age of 65 and those who have comorbid conditions like cancer or cardiac complications.
- The majority of cases in Manitoba of these cases are self-isolating at home without any further medical attention. We have had one death in an individual who was in the ICU for a period of time.
- Symptoms in Manitoba are presenting as a cough, sore throat, fever and chills.
- Several ICU treatment options will be available starting next week. We are very well positioned in Manitoba to start using some of the available therapeutic interventions, knowing that there is currently no definitive therapy that has been shown to be successful.
- There is currently no vaccine for COVID-19, however, trials have begun in the United States and we expect to see activity around vaccine clinical trials in Canada this summer.

2. Clinical Response Update

- Southern Health-Santé Sud is working with Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL) and Shared Health to implement important actions to reduce the health risks of COVID-19.
- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is recommending enhanced contact/droplet precautions when working with all suspect or positive cases of COVID-19. This includes the use of gloves, gowns, surgical masks and eye protection and the use of N-95 respirators for aerosol-generating medical procedures. PHAC also emphasizes COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that is different from Ebola virus, which is transmitted through bodily fluids. Full body protection is not required when managing COVID-19 patients.

- Consultation has been done with local and national experts in infectious disease, as well as experts on coronavirus research and coronavirus infection control. The consensus is that collecting a nasopharyngeal swab is non-aerosol-generating and therefore, N-95 respirators are not required for this procedure. This justifies reserving the N-95 respirators for other high-risk procedures.
- Infection, Prevention and Control protocols: The Chief Occupational Medical Officer for the Workplace Safety and Health Branch states that, “Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) takes infection control very seriously and continues to monitor information as it becomes available. Current information indicates that COVID-19 is spread by coming into contact with respiratory droplets from an infected person. WSH considers that compliance with the PHAC recommendations is sufficient for ensuring workers are protected.”
- Provincial committees are meeting daily to plan and implement actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Work is ongoing in areas such as Public Health – Healthy Living, Logistics/Supply Chain Management, Long Term Care, Human Resources, as well as Community, Medical and Acute care. We have established a regional incident command that aligns with the provincial structure to ensure that there is a coordinated, consistent response across the province.
- We have taken precautions at Long Term Care facilities and acute care sites to restrict visitor access, reduce the number of entry points to sites and implement screening at all remaining entry points.
- Three Drive-Thru Community Testing Sites have been established, including Steinbach, Winkler and Portage La Prairie. We are prepared to add additional sites if necessary.
- Planning is underway on patient pathways. The sickest patients requiring intensive care (ICU) will be cared for in Winnipeg or Brandon.
- There has been a reduction in non-urgent patient services including surgery, diagnostics and out-patient and community services to allow a greater focus on the pandemic response.
- Obstetrics: A guideline document from Shared Health on Obstetrical patients is uploaded to the Health Providers’ Site (HPS). There is also a COVID-19 Obstetrics Working Group lead by Noreen Shirliff and Dr. Fortier.
- Housekeeping is closely adhering to routine practices with precautions at all sites within Southern Health-Santé Sud. For staff working in buildings not cleaned by Southern Health Santé Sud staff, please be assured that we are working with our external partners to ensure routine cleaning practices are being followed. We have also placed additional signage in lunchrooms and staff washrooms regarding correct hand washing techniques.
- Vacation requests will continue to be reviewed based on the various collective agreements as well as operational requirements. There are no plans at this time to cancel staff members’ vacation due to the pandemic.

3. Please REMAIN INFORMED – where to get most up to date protocols and info on Covid19

- See [Southern Health-Santé Sud HPS](#) for information on COVID-19. This site is updated daily and we have improved access by putting a direct link on the Southern Health-Santé Sud public website.
- You are also encouraged to visit the [MHSAL](#) and [Shared Health](#) websites.

4. Staff Urged to Self-Monitor

- Staff must stay home when sick, even if symptoms are mild. We all have a duty to protect our patients, our colleagues and our community.
- Please watch for the following: recent onset of fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose in addition to other symptoms such as muscle aches, fatigue, headache, diarrhea and vomiting.

5. You Matter... our Community Matters...

- Our top priority is to minimize the health risk of COVID-19 for patients, staff and our community. The region is working closely with the Province to monitor, gather information, assess risk and coordinate the distribution of resources needed for COVID-19 to ensure appropriate supply.
- You have shown some of your best qualities by working together, helping those in need and making sure we are ready to take on the challenges we may face in the days and weeks ahead. We know that many of us are experiencing feelings of fear, anxiety, and stress. Others are worried about their childcare and family needs while dealing with heightened demands in the workplace. We want to encourage you to reach out if you need support...
- The Wellness Support Line is a confidential phone number you can call. Mental health clinicians are ready to listen and support you during this difficult time. This is a phone number you can call to debrief and decompress with professionals outside your normal support network and workplace. Please visit the [Wellness Support Line](#) webpage for more information on how to access this line. I also want to remind you that we also have our [Employee Assistance Program](#) that is always available for employees.
- If you have any concerns and/or input or suggestions, please reach out to your supervisor. Your supervisor will do their best to communicate through our Regional Operations Centre, which meets daily on teleconference calls. We depend on you to share any valuable input and feedback through existing channels.
- *We need more than ever to pull together, stay together, and work together for the health and wellbeing of the people in our communities – and each other. We need more than ever to support each other today so we can get through this together for a healthier tomorrow.*

Thank you.