



**Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care**

300 Carlton Street, Winnipeg MB R3B 3M9

[www.manitoba.ca](http://www.manitoba.ca)

January 11, 2024

Dear Health Care Provider:

**Re: Updated Manitoba Public Health Protocols and Guidelines**

Please be advised that the updated Manitoba Public Health protocol for hepatitis C was released in December 2023 (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/hepc.pdf>).

The new protocol is in alignment with global and national efforts to eliminate hepatitis C. Treatment for HCV infection has evolved substantially with the introduction of highly effective direct acting antivirals. HCV screening with the goal of linking clients to care has known benefits in reducing the risk of cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma, as well as the public health benefit of reducing transmission through early treatment and viral clearance.

Cadham Provincial Laboratory typically performs reflexive testing for HCV antigen (HCV Ag) when there is a positive antibody test (anti-HCV) to determine if active disease is present. Specifically, reflexive testing occurs for the first new positive anti-HCV and if it has been more than a year since the last positive anti-HCV. The HCV Ag result is reported at the same time as the anti-HCV result, and is now also available for viewing in eChart.

It is recommended that all HCV-infected patients with active disease (HCV RNA detected or Ag positive), regardless of stage and ongoing risk factors, be referred to a hepatitis C treatment provider for consideration of treatment.

In addition to the Hepatitis C protocol, the following public health documents were also updated:

- Syphilis Management Tool (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/docs/syphilis-management-tool.pdf>) - Released in September 2023  
Contains a two page quick reference, visual summary of content in the Syphilis protocol.
- Coronavirus-COVID-19 public health protocol (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/covid.pdf>) – Released in November 2023  
Updated to align with current public health guidance for COVID-19.
- Interim Public Health Guidelines for H5N1 Avian Influenza ([https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/docs/avian\\_interim\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/docs/avian_interim_guidelines.pdf)) – Released in November 2023  
Chemoprophylaxis recommendations for people who have close contact with infected birds were revised to align with national recommendations for the current H5N1 strain currently circulating in birds in North America. The information letter that is distributed to contacts/providers was also updated ([https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/docs/avian\\_contact\\_letter.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/docs/avian_contact_letter.pdf)).

All stakeholders are encouraged to refer to the updated protocols/guidelines.

The updates were undertaken in line with the department's role for establishing standards and policies, and aim to clarify the role of Public Health, establish standard practice and documentation, and ensure a consistent public health approach throughout the province.

We greatly appreciate the contributions of many provincial stakeholders, including Medical Officers of Health, service delivery organization staff, clinical specialists, and subject matter experts. We thank them for lending their expertise and providing feedback during various stages of the review process.

Please share this information with all relevant colleagues in your facility or clinic.

Sincerely,

*"Original Signed By"*

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