

## Health and Healthy Living

Public Health Division  
Office of the Chief Public Health Officer  
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April 23, 2009

Dear Colleague,

- Manitoba Public Health has been informed that clusters of severe respiratory illness in Mexico are under investigation and is asking Manitoba health care practitioners to remain vigilant.
- Manitoba Public Health requires all health care practitioners to report cases of severe respiratory illness (i.e. those ill enough to require hospitalization) in patients that have traveled to Mexico or been in contact with an ill person who has traveled to Mexico since the beginning of March 2009. Such cases should be reported promptly by calling a Medical Officer of Health at **(204)788-8666** (24/7).
- For clinical advice consult an Infectious Disease specialist at (204)787-2071 (24/7).
- For guidelines on laboratory testing, visit <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sars-sras/sri-eng.php>
- For advice on facility infection control measures, consult your facility or regional infection control and prevention (IC&P) practitioner and policies. For further information on infection control measures, visit <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/99vol25/25s4/> for the Health Canada Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care document.
- For more information, patients may call Health Links-Info Santé in Winnipeg @ 788-8200 or toll free @ 1-888- 315- 9257.
- For the latest information, visit <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/>.

### Current situation:

On April 20, 2009 the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) posted the following alert on the Canadian Integrated Outbreak Surveillance Centre (CIOSC):

#### Clusters of Severe Respiratory Illness (SRI) in Mexico

A number of severe respiratory illness (SRI) clusters are occurring in various locations of south and central Mexico. SRI cases developed influenza-like illness (ILI) symptoms which progressed rapidly to severe respiratory distress in about 5 days. A high proportion required mechanical ventilation. The case-fatality rate appears to be relatively high. Of note, most cases were previously healthy young adults aged between 25-44 years old and some health care workers have been affected as well. No clear cause has yet been identified; however some samples tested positive for influenza A and B.

To date, there have been no recently reported cases of severe respiratory illness in a Manitoban associated with travel in Mexico. As of 3 p.m. April 23, 2009, PHAC has not issued a travel advisory.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

*"Original signed by Joel Kettner"*

Joel Kettner, MD, MSc, FRCSC, FRCPC  
Chief Public Health Officer