

COVID-19 IN MANITOBA

Manitoba has implemented a number of changes to better protect the health of Manitobans. They include:

- recommending the cancellation of gatherings of more than 50 people;
- suspending services at licensed child-care centres effective at end-of-day March 20 to April 10;
- working to create dedicated child-care options for front-line and essential service staff;
- suspending classes in Manitoba kindergarten to Grade 12 schools effective March 23 to April 10;
- closing casinos;
- recommending the immediate suspension of visitors in long-term care facilities across Manitoba with exceptions for compassionate reasons;
- allowing only one visitor at a time in acute care facilities, with exceptions for parents of children in hospital or for compassionate reasons;
- postponing surgeries for patients who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and patients will be contacted directly if their surgery is affected;
- suspending adult day programs and similar programming located within long-term care or personal care facilities;
- developing virtual visit and virtual care psychotherapy options to supplement traditional models of care including video-conferencing options;
- strongly advising all Manitobans, including health-care providers, to cancel or postpone any non-essential international travel;
- developing a new self-assessment tool, which is now online to help Manitobans determine whether they need to call Health Links–Info Santé to get a referral for testing or to self-isolate;
- implementing community screening locations in Winnipeg and rural Manitoba where people can be screened and tested for COVID-19 after a referral from Health Links–Info Santé; and
- providing advice on social distancing measures for Manitobans.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.