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/COVID-19/ Public service announcements and news releases

- **STICK IT TO COVID: Get Vaccinated to Help Protect Children:** In a recent review of more than 1,600 cases, 98 per cent of school-aged COVID cases lived in unimmunized or partly immunized households.
- **Increased COVID-19 exposure risk in Eston:** Please be aware that there is an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 at the following location where a person or persons attended while infectious.
- **View the extended COVID-19 dashboard for additional data.**

/COVID-19/ Support for each other our greatest strength against fourth wave

First, this is a message the three of us wish we didn’t feel the need to send.

As you know, COVID infections are at a record high and hospitalizations are increasing at an alarming rate, all of which brings unprecedented demand on our health care system. More
importantly, the pandemic puts even more demand on every single health-care worker in Saskatchewan, regardless of where you work and who you serve.

The reinstatement of the Letter of Understanding (LOU) by the government last week allows us to quickly move staff to the areas of highest need and provide safe patient care. For some of you this provides welcome relief in the face of increasing COVID pressures in your home units and teams. For others it adds to the uncertainty and fatigue you are already facing.

What it ultimately does is help us support each other in our hour of need for the sole purpose of ensuring we can deliver on our promise to provide the right care to the residents of Saskatchewan where and when they need it the most. We must let that guide our actions and our response to the situation.

Second, we understand you are anxious about the uncertainty the increasing demand for health care services on your time will bring, and wonder what more we will ask you to do.

We know we have asked a lot of you already. We can't express that enough. We have had to ask you to make extraordinary sacrifices and efforts because when faced with extraordinary circumstances we must take extraordinary measures. You have gone above and beyond.

**We can say with certainty and gratitude that your response has been extraordinary.**

Unfortunately, as the fourth wave gets worse, we will ask more of you and we must all ask more of ourselves.

Some of you will be asked to return to COVID roles you didn't like or to work you had already decided to leave behind. Some of you will be asked to take on more or different responsibilities and duties as before. You will all be asked to continue to make intensely personal sacrifices for the patients you serve and the families you leave at home. We commit to make these asks in the most respectful and supportive way we can. We also commit to working with unions to improve the way the existing letter of understanding is applied. We thank you for your dedication and sacrifice.

To those who want us to hire more people, recruitment is absolutely an important tactic, however health-care workers are in high demand and this shortage is a challenge across Canada, and beyond. We will continue to recruit, but the bottom line is, we – the existing team of health-care workers – are the key to getting through the fourth wave and out of this pandemic. We don’t want to slow down services and move you to areas outside of where you were hired, **but we are way past that point now.**

Due to escalating COVID infections, hospitalizations and ICU admissions, **we are in dire need with no other choice than to move you to where you are most needed in order to provide vital health services to those we serve.**

Please remember, we’re in this together and we’re all pitching in to make sure your patients, and the people of Saskatchewan, have the safe and effective care they need when they need it. Union and non-unionized staff alike. This is about serving the people of Saskatchewan when they need us the most.

Third, we are working to ensure we put every single staff member in the most effective position in the least stressful way that we can. We are asking leaders to make sure you know the “why” behind the moves and that the “how” is done in the most supportive manner possible,
with leaders providing support and coaching to you – our greatest resource – every step of the way.

Exceptional efforts are being asked of us all and we recognize the toll it is taking on us individually and collectively. In the midst of this, what we do have control over is how we take care of ourselves and demonstrate respect, patience and kindness for those we work alongside. Please be there for each other.

Similarly, we know the impact on your personal life, particularly the impact on your family of this pandemic that is often overlooked. We understand the sacrifices they’re making, too, and how it might weigh on you. Please be there for your family and for yourself.

As always, there are numerous resources and supports for you to access in care of your own well-being (KB0011533). Please use them.

Finally, we ask all of you to support and understand these decisions. We acknowledge the situation you’re in, the fatigue you’re experiencing, the frustration you’re feeling – we share those feelings. And we commit to support you – each and every one of you – through this most challenging time. We need to continue to work together and take care of each other to address, and ultimately rise to, the challenge of the fourth wave.

Thank you.

Dr. Susan Shaw, Chief Medical Officer, SHA
Mike Northcott, Chief Human Resources Officer, SHA
Suann Laurent, Chief Operating Officer, SHA

AIMS – What’s changing: Purchasing supplies

With the implementation of AIMS, there will be changes in the way we perform daily functions. One of these areas is purchasing. Previously, staff requisitioned supplies as needed. After the AIMS implementation, there will be designated staff who will submit purchase requisitions. These individuals will be identified by their directors or managers. This new process has several advantages:

- Supervisors will direct purchase requests to the designated individuals who are able to compile orders, lightening the workload for managers who will then approve large orders rather than numerous requisitions.
- This allows the individual requisitioning supplies to become a purchasing process expert for their area.
- Developing these skills creates efficiencies for the area and reduces the assistance required to support individuals who may only order supplies occasionally.

The advantage also extends to controlling costs, as there is greater awareness of current licensing agreements. Information will be shared as to who the designated individuals are within your area, as those decisions are made.

/COVID-19/ PICU at Jim Pattison Children’s Hospital to temporarily admit adults under 40
As part of Saskatchewan Health Authority’s (SHA’s) focus on balancing health system capacity province-wide, the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at Jim Pattison Children’s Hospital (JPCH) in Saskatoon will temporarily accept selected adults up to age 40 less a day.

The change is effective immediately and will ensure as many patients as possible receive appropriate levels of care. Adult patients requiring an ICU bed will be considered for admission to JPCH. Patients are selected jointly through a clinical review by the adult critical care physicians (intensivists) and the pediatric intensivist. Pediatric patients will continue to receive and be prioritized for critical care within the province’s PICU at the JPCH; no pediatric patients will be displaced.

“Critical care capacity is under strain and all avenues of support need to be explored to so we can continue to care for extremely ill patients,” said Dr. Susan Shaw, Chief Medical Officer, SHA.

The decision was made in consultation with adult and pediatric critical care stakeholders.

The move is part of a larger SHA surge plan announced Sept. 17 to prepare for a growing number of COVID patients throughout the health system. The PICU will now be prepared to surge to a total of 18 critical care beds, including six additional “flex” beds, for both pediatric patients as well as selected adult patients. Staffing plans have been developed and continue to be secured for the additional beds, much of which will come through service slowdowns.

A similar strategy which saw the age of admission at JPCH temporarily raised to 30 years of age less a day was employed during the second wave of the pandemic, in February 2021.

“In the early stages of the pandemic response the PICU and full JPCH team quickly looked for ways we could support the provincial pandemic response while keeping focus on the children and families we served. Our PICU team has the skills and expertise to expand our services to a select group of the adult population, taking pressure off of the greater system. We have been thoughtful in building our surge plan, keeping children the priority and in simulating our responses to adult care,” said Dr. Tanya Holt, Division Head, Pediatric Intensive Care and Pediatric Transport for the SHA.

The SHA’s normal intensive care unit (ICU) capacity is 79 beds distributed at facilities in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Swift Current and North Battleford. To increase ICU capacity, the SHA has also added 22 surge beds in Saskatoon, Regina, Yorkton, North Battleford and Swift Current. As of 12:45 p.m., Sept. 21, 78 of the 101 available ICU beds were full and two adult COVID infectious patients had been admitted to JPCH.

“We’d like to thank the patients and families affected by this change for their patience and support. We’d also like to thank all the staff impacted by this decision for their dedication to providing care under the most challenging of circumstances,” said Dr. Paul Hayes, Area Department Lead, Adult Critical Care for the SHA. “Working together, as an entire province, is the only way to see us through this difficult time.”
One of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit beds at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital

View this story on the Saskatchewan Health Authority website, and share it with family and friends.

/COVID-19/ College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan and COVID-19 vaccine exemptions

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS) has provided guidance to all physicians who may be receiving requests from patients to provide a COVID-19 vaccination exemption letter.

CPSS stresses any such letter does not declare a patient free from an obligation or liability due to their unvaccinated status. The letter, issued only in appropriate clinical circumstances, would not allow the patient to have the same privileges vaccinated persons have, but would be something they could present to agencies or institutions for consideration of how the unvaccinated person could be accommodated.

There are few recognized contraindications to the COVID-19 vaccines, including a severe allergy or anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine or to any of its components that cannot be mitigated (confirmed by a physician, and preferably an immunologist/allergist), and a diagnosed episode of myocarditis/pericarditis after receipt of an mRNA vaccine.

More information can be found in this document.

/COVID-19/ Update: Negative COVID-19 test results text message and voice call wording

The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) has updated the automated text message and voice call messaging for negative COVID-19 test results to reflect the new Public Health
Measures which came into effect on Sept. 17. The updated automated messaging for negative COVID-19 test results will begin on Sept. 20, 2021.

The current automated messaging for positive COVID-19 test results reflects the new Public Health Measures.

For information about automated COVID-19 test results please visit the Government of Saskatchewan’s Test Results webpage.
URGENT MESSAGE from the Saskatchewan Health Authority
First_Name is NEGATIVE for COVID-19 based on the test taken on 21-Sept-21.

If you have been told you are a close contact to a positive COVID-19 case, you are required to self-isolate for 14 days from the date of your last exposure if you are not fully vaccinated. If you are fully vaccinated you are required to self-monitor and seek testing at the first sign of COVID-19 symptoms.

Please visit [www.saskatchewan.ca/covid-19](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/covid-19) or call HealthLine 811 for more information.
1. Reply 1 to Accept
2. Reply 2 for Wrong Number
Reply with your choice number.
**COVID-19**/ Faces of the Fight from Allison Taylor, ICU nurse: Grateful to be vaccinated

This was written by Allison Taylor, ICU Nurse, Royal University Hospital, Saskatoon when she was in quarantine. She has now completed her quarantine and is back at work in the ICU.

Well, here I am. In quarantine for COVID.

About a week ago, I woke up from my night shift with cold symptoms. Fortunately, we have home testing kits provided to us through work, so I was able to test myself right away, and isolate from my family immediately when the result was positive. I went to a testing site and got a PCR test which confirmed that I did indeed have the Delta variant.

I’ve decided to be open about my experience because with the infection rates we currently have in Saskatchewan, COVID-19 is everywhere and I certainly won’t be the only health-care worker/parent going through this. I’m also hoping my story might just convince one more person to get vaccinated.

I have absolutely no idea where I got COVID from. Not a clue. It could have been through an interaction at work or perhaps just picking up groceries, there’s no way to tell. Here’s the good news though: because I am vaccinated, my symptoms are extremely mild. A stuffy nose (which has now almost completely resolved) has been my only symptom, over a week into this.

Because I am vaccinated, my transmission rate was so low that my husband and my children didn’t contract COVID from me, even being around me during the contagious period before I had symptoms.

Because I am vaccinated, I will not require ICU care or a ventilator.

Because I am vaccinated, I’m not taking a hospital bed away from a cancer patient, a sick child, a car accident victim.

Because I am vaccinated, I’m going to be fine. I have absolutely no doubts that this could have looked much different for me prior to vaccines.

You see, I largely spend my days at work taking care of COVID-19-positive people on ventilators. The ICU is filled to the brim right now with COVID patients, almost all of which are unvaccinated. Young, healthy, medical history or not, this Delta variant in particular does not care.

We walk into work and we see bed after bed of COVID patients face-down, on their stomachs to improve oxygenation, struggling to breathe, with some really poor vital signs on the monitor. They’re often maxed out on 100 per cent oxygen and Nitric Oxide. They’re running a dozen infusions including paralytics, sedation, and vasopressors. At this point we almost don’t need to give report anymore. “COVID?” - yep. “Unvaxxed?” - yep. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

We are already working short-staffed every day and now I have to leave my team even shorter because I have COVID and need to isolate. This is the part that kills us: if you don’t trust the medical professionals who are literally begging you to get this vaccine, why are we the very people you come running to for treatment when you get COVID and can no longer breathe at home?
When I first tested positive, my immediate fear was not for myself, but for my two young, vulnerable children, who aren’t eligible to be vaccinated yet.

If I had passed the Delta variant to them, there’s nothing to say they wouldn’t have been one of the children in the PICU requiring life support. We are seeing children as young as three months in the PICU here in this province with COVID.

I felt like I held my breath until I got their results back, and thank God they’re both negative and feeling great. Believe me, when vaccines are approved for 12 and under, we will be the first in line to get them vaccinated. Because I believe in science, and I trust these vaccines. I am literally proof right now that they work.

One of the hardest parts of this all has been isolating away from them for 10 days. They don’t understand why mommy went away. They want to come snuggle and read stories. My four-year-old knocks on my door every day and says, “Mommy, do you still have the virus?”

You see here’s where the whole “my body my choice” rationale is flawed. It’s not just about YOU. I hear it time and time again, “If I got COVID I’d be fine.” Ok. So you’re fine. You recover at home. But what about who you pass it to? That child with asthma? That cancer survivor? That transplant recipient? You’re completely fine with handing all these people a death sentence? It’s a selfish mindset and it’s the reason this pandemic isn’t ending.

The vaccines were supposed to be our light at the end of the tunnel. They’re HERE and they’re safe and effective. This should be all over by now….but, by all means, if it’s your body your choice, we’ll just keep admitting more and more COVID patients to our overburdened health-care system and you better just pray you don’t need health-care services for anything else.

So yes, you can still get COVID if you’re vaccinated. The takeaway here is that my symptoms are next to nothing, it’s extremely unlikely I passed it to anyone, I’m not taking a hospital bed away from those who need it, and this is all thanks to the vaccines.

Our province is sinking right now.

We have the worst COVID numbers and the lowest vaccine uptake in Canada. So one last time, please get vaccinated. Stay safe Saskatchewan.

Also perhaps send thoughts and prayers to my husband, who on the other end of this, is quarantining with two toddlers, alone.
Allison Taylor, ICU Nurse in Saskatoon.

View this story on the Saskatchewan Health Authority website, and share it with family and friends.

**COVID-19** Outbreak mitigation and management Town Hall

There will be an **Outbreak Town Hall on Wednesday, Sept. 22 from 2-3pm**. This time will serve as an opportunity to review provincial guidance regarding outbreak mitigation and management. After a large group overview, participants will be placed into smaller groups according to your IHICC to allow time for questions and discussion by area. Please register in advance and indicate the area in which you work.

**Resilience – How to deal with worry**

Worry is a common experience for many of us. It is absolutely normal to worry when we face difficulties. It is not always helpful though.

**Practice tips:**

1. Try to notice your mind worrying or sense the anxiety
2. Pay careful attention to what your thoughts are actually saying
3. If you can write them down, you see how silly they can be
4. Treat worry as a bad habit that you want to stop quickly
5. When worries arise, drop attention to your breath and relax
6. Use your Tactical Calm (deep slow mindful breathing) practice every day
7. Shift your attention to something you can sort out
8. Keep a sense of humour
It is human to worry. As you learn to shift from worry to being calm and in the present, you will feel much better. Your sleep, your relationships and work will improve.

Source: Worry (poster)

The following resources provide more information and practice tips to address worry:

- Worry (2 Min Video)
- How can mindfulness help with worry and stress? (Video)

If worry persists, remember that reaching out for help is a sign of strength.

- The Mental Health Support Line (MHSL) – staffed Monday to Friday (not including stats) from 0800-1630hrs at 1-833-233-3314. Calls outside those hours will go to our voicemail service, and daytime clinicians will follow-up next working day. Calling the MHSL offers any individual employed by the SHA the ability to quickly and simply connect with a trained mental health professional for support, resources, and a brief intervention. This is one option of many which staff can use to meet their needs during the pandemic.

Resilience is something we do through daily practices and habits that promote our health and well-being.

/COVID-19/ Influenza – Clinical document updates

Flu Season-General Flu Resources

- UPDATED: Clinical Procedures for Influenza Immunization have been updated for the 2021/2022 Flu Season Campaign:
  - CS-CP-0003 Clinical Procedure Influenza Immunization with a patient-specific order
  - CS-CP-0004 Clinical Procedure Influenza Immunization without a patient-specific order – includes medical directive

/COVID-19/ Clinical document updates

Broken Links: Please email clinicalstandards@saskhealthauthority.ca if you encounter a document with broken links that may have been missed.

COVID-19 Website Feedback: Please email clinicalstandards@saskhealthauthority.ca with feedback on the new website platform and provide suggestions for how to improve the site for the user.

To locate the COVID Information for Health Care Providers: SHA website → About SHA → COVID-19 Information for Health Care Providers

Clinical Screening Tools

- UPDATE: The clinical screening tools below have been updated. The close contact question has been changed to “in the past 14 days, have you been identified as a
contact to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 and been told to self-isolate?”. The community and hemodialysis forms had the following update to the action section:

If asymptomatic and answered “yes” to any of the questions: Advise patient to self-monitor if vaccinated and to self-isolate for 14 days from return of international travel or date of close contact if partially or unvaccinated.

- SHA 0002 Inpatient, Outpatients and Continuing Care Screening Form
- SHA 0002 - Fillable Version- used if person completing form is not located where patient health record is (Use CV-19 WS0007 for guidance on how to complete and manage the form)
- SHA 0004 Emergency Department Triage COVID-19 Screening Form
- SHA 0005 EMS Rapid Triage COVID-19 Screening Form
- SHA 0008 Deaf/Hard of Hearing COVID-19 Screening Questions Form
- SHA 0036 Hemodialysis COVID-19 Screening Form
- SHA 0054 Community - Home Visit - COVID-19 Screening Form
- SHA 0076 Community - Office Visit - COVID-19 Screening Form - NOTE: Vaccine Clinics to also use this form

TO PRINT AND POST: Just print this email.

DO YOU HAVE A SUBMISSION? See our guidelines here.

DID YOU MISS AN ISSUE? See our archives.

SHA Daily Rounds is the Saskatchewan Health Authority’s e-newsletter. Send your feedback to news@saskhealthauthority.ca