COVID-19

Guidance for Primary Care Clinics and Outpatient Practices –

ORANGE and RED

*The following guidance refers to geographic areas, communities and/or facilities that have been designated as ORANGE or RED in Manitoba’s Pandemic Response System.

Manitoba’s public health restrictions and orders are regularly reviewed and assessed.

Latest updates are included in BLUE and listed in the Change Tracker on the final page.

To assist physicians in understanding what this means for their outpatient practices, the following guidance is offered, with acknowledgement that many practices have continued to offer services during the pandemic response, but that these have been at a reduced volume and have been heavily dependent on the use of virtual care.

During this period, it is important to keep in mind that there is the potential for further measures as the pandemic continues to evolve. We must also keep in mind that the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) can be expected to remain volatile for the foreseeable future and requires ongoing diligence in both conservation and appropriate utilization.

Considerations for clinics in areas designated RED by Manitoba’s Pandemic Response System:

For Fee-For-Service Practices: Practices should adhere to the following principles with respect to in-person patient volumes:

- Ability to adhere to current Public Health guidance and requirements (hand hygiene, infection prevention and control protocols and physical distancing);
- Access and availability of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Practices are encouraged to maintain use of virtual care as much as possible and aim to reduce the number of in-person visits to 1/3 (with 2/3 of visits being conducted via virtual care).
For Alternate Funded Sites (e.g. direct operations or community health clinics):
Clinics should be work with their managers and local RHA to decrease in-person patient volumes according to the following principles:

- Ability to protect the supply of PPE;
- Ability to adhere to current Public Health guidance and requirements (hand hygiene, infection prevention and control protocols and physical distancing);
- Practices are encouraged to maintain use of virtual care as much as possible and aim to reduce the number of in-person visits to 1/3 (with 2/3 of visits being conducted via virtual care).

For Hospital-Based Clinics: By virtue of their locations, hospital-based clinics may face additional restrictions. Clinics should be working with their managers and department heads to plan to decrease in-person volumes according to the following principles:

- Ability to protect the supply of PPE;
- Ability to adhere to current Public Health guidance and requirements (hand hygiene, infection prevention and control protocols and physical distancing);
- Consideration of broader site access issues and impacts on other services, including regional planning.
- Practices are encouraged to maintain use of virtual care as much as possible and aim to reduce the number of in-person visits to 1/3 (with 2/3 of visits being conducted via virtual care).
Considerations for clinics areas designated ORANGE by Manitoba’s Pandemic Response System.

**For Fee-For-Service Practices:** Practices should adhere to the following principles with respect to in-person patient volumes:

- Ability to adhere to current Public Health guidance and requirements (hand hygiene, infection prevention and control protocols and physical distancing);
- Access and availability of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Practices are encouraged to continue to use of virtual care as much as possible but may aim to increase the number of in-person visits to 1/2 (with 1/2 of visits being conducted via virtual care).

**For Alternate Funded Sites (e.g. direct operations or community health clinics):** Clinics should be work with their managers and local RHA to decrease in-person patient volumes according to the following principles:

- Ability to protect the supply of PPE;
- Ability to adhere to current Public Health guidance and requirements (hand hygiene, infection prevention and control protocols and physical distancing);
- Practices are encouraged to continue to use of virtual care as much as possible but may aim to increase the number of in-person visits to 1/2 (with 1/2 of visits being conducted via virtual care).
With these things in mind, we would like to provide the following guidance to primary care clinics and outpatient clinics during re-opening.

**Patient Screening Processes Should Be Reinforced**

With increasing COVID-19 activity, practices should be with diligent patient screening processes, including:

a) **Telephone-screening**: Ensure that reception staff are screening patients who call to ensure they are able to be cared for in the appropriate setting.

b) **Display of signage**: Practices should continue to display posters warning patients and visitors with symptoms to take appropriate precautions.

c) **Entry screening**: Clinic staff should reinforce patient screening upon entry to identify patients needing Orange Zone Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements (i.e. potential COVID-19 symptoms, COVID-19 contact, or returning from travel) so they can be appropriately and safely managed.

**Resources:**

- [https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-testing-protocols-for-pcps.pdf](https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-testing-protocols-for-pcps.pdf)
- [https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/providers/resources-for-providers-and-clinics/](https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/providers/resources-for-providers-and-clinics/)
Staff Screening Should Be Reinforced

All clinic staff (including physicians) must perform self-screening prior to starting their shifts.

Updated Guiding Principles for Staff Screening are available to support the development of sustainable staff screening approaches for health care facilities, clinics and practices. Information is available at https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-guiding-principles-for-staff-screening.pdf

Staff with symptoms should be tested for COVID-19 at a designated testing site and should contact Occupational Health Services while they self-isolate and await their results. This Occupational Health Service is available centrally by calling toll-free 1-888-203-4066.

Resource:

Strict Infection Prevention & Control Strategies Must be in Place

Practices should reinforce the use infection prevention strategies including:

a) Tissues and Hand-sanitizer: Tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be available at all entrances/reception areas.

b) Physical distancing approaches: At reception desks and in waiting rooms, layout should allow for patients to maintain a 6-foot distance between individuals. Clinics may want to limit number of patients in the waiting room at any given time.

c) Use of masks by patients: Anyone attending a community-based health care setting is required to wear a non-medical mask for the duration of their appointment/service.

Resource:

d) Approaches for management of Orange-Zone or COVID-risk patients: Primary care clinics have differing capacity in their ability to assess and manage patients who present with potential COVID symptoms (which often overlap with other common respiratory symptoms or influenza-like illness) or require Orange-zone precautions for other reasons. Practices should review their processes to appropriately manage these patients. These processes should include:

   a) instruct patients with mild symptoms who do not require a physical assessment to get testing at their local COVID-19 testing location
(https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/locations.html) or to call Health Links – Info Santé (204-788-8200, or toll-free 1-888-315-9257)
b) instruct patients with mild to moderate symptoms (or respiratory symptoms which may or may not be related to COVID) that require a physical assessment to a health facility/clinic that is prepared to assess/test for COVID-19.

- if your clinic has adequate capacity to assess ORANGE zone patients, make appropriate arrangements to safely assessment the patient (ensuring physical separation, infection control and use of additional PPE)
- If your clinic does not have adequate capacity to assess ORANGE zone patients, direct them to a COVID Assessment Clinic

Criteria for COVID-19 Assessment Clinic:

a) COVID-19 positive with non-urgent respiratory illness that needs assessment (24-48 hour wait for appointment)
b) COVID-19 positive with other primary care needs that cannot be assessed by their Primary Care Provider
c) Not known to be COVID-19 positive with Influenza Like Illness/Respiratory symptoms but not needing Urgent Care/Emergency Department and can’t be assessed by their Primary Care Provider
d) Instruct patients with severe/emergent symptoms to call 9-1-1 for emergency services

Resources:

e) Use of appropriate PPE for providers and staff: Providers and staff must use personal protective equipment (PPE) as per Shared Health recommendations. Practices should continue PPE conserving measures. NEW – Practices should review updated PPE guidelines.

Resources:
https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/ppe-provincial-requirements-patients.pdf

f) Cleaning protocols: Clinics must have cleaning protocols to support infection prevention and control.

Resources:
Increase Use of Virtual Care Modalities to Reduce In-Clinic Volumes

Considering the need to ensure physical distancing in clinics as well as the need to reduce visits and/or the risk of exposure for higher risk patients, it remains important for providers to continue to maximize the offering of virtual visits. We recognize that not all services can be easily and efficiently done by phone or video and some will continue to require an in-office visit.

It is recommended that practices continue to offer virtual care, in particular for those visits that do not require physical examination or a procedure (e.g. mental health, chronic disease management, etc.).

Resource: https://doctorsmanitoba.ca/covid/virtualcare/

Change Tracker

January 22, 2021

- Added Change Tracker
- Updated guidance to reflect recommendation that 2/3 of appointments be completed virtually for clinics located in areas designated as RED on Manitoba’s Pandemic Response System and 1/2 of appointments be completed virtually for clinics located in areas designated ORANGE on Manitoba’s Pandemic Response System.