COVID-19 activity is on the rise and we are seeing increased cases among patients and staff across Manitoba. It is our responsibility, as health-care workers and as community members, to do everything we can to keep ourselves, our patients and our loved ones safe.

As highly infectious variants circulate in the community, we are seeing some breakthrough infections amongst fully vaccinated health-care workers. Outbreaks in health-care facilities (hospitals and personal care homes) are affecting staff, patients and residents and are impacting our health system’s ability to maintain non-COVID care.

Please note the following few important reminders as we continue our fight against COVID-19.

**Wear the right PPE – Know your setting:**
Check for signs before entering a zone. Don all appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) before entering. All outbreaks requiring protocols for admissions to acute care are listed on the [COVID-19 Shared Health website](https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/healthcare/workers.html).

Remember it is how you use the PPE that will protect you. Perform your [point of care risk assessment](https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/healthcare/workers.html) and wear the appropriate PPE for every situation. If you have questions about what and how to wear PPE, refer to the [PPE table](https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/healthcare/workers.html) or speak to your manager or Infection Prevention and Control.

**PPE must be worn correctly and consistently:**
Remember that donning and doffing are high risk moments.

Recent audits of PPE use show some frequently observed breaches. These include:

- **Not wearing respiratory protection correctly:** Masks should not be on foreheads, beneath chins or hanging off ears. Your mask must cover your mouth and nose to be effective.

- **Double masking:** Staff have been observed using an N95 over a procedure mask or vice versa, or wearing multiple procedure masks at the same time. More PPE is not better PPE, as the multiple layers may increase the risk of self-contamination during doffing. Select the [appropriate respiratory protection](https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/healthcare/workers.html) for the patient interaction based on your point of care risk assessment. At the end of extended use or when the mask becomes soiled, damp or damaged, discard your mask, perform hand hygiene and don a new mask when one is required.

- **Eye protection:** Wear your eye shields/goggles consistently. They will not protect you if they are worn on your forehead or around your neck. Use of non-approved eye shields is also discouraged.
• **Cross contamination and hand hygiene:** Hand hygiene is key. Avoid excessive touching of your mask and perform hand hygiene regularly.

**If your second COVID-19 vaccine dose was six months ago, please get your booster:**
While two doses offer excellent protection again the virus, the variants are incredibly infectious. Many health-care workers received the second dose of their vaccine more than six months ago and a third dose is now advised and can offer additional protection.
  
  - A prescription is NOT required for health-care workers.
  - Take your health system ID badge with you to your appointment. For more information, view the [eligibility criteria](#).

**Get your flu vaccine:**
Protect yourself and others from illness during respiratory virus season.

Flu immunization clinics have begun and Manitoba is now allowing the COVID-19 vaccine to be given at the same time as other vaccines. Clinic information is available [here](#).

This change is consistent with updated guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) on September 28.

**Clean hands protect against infection:**
Proper hand hygiene is essential to protecting yourself and others. Don’t forget to turn off the faucet using a paper towel.

**Continue COVID-19 best practices in the community:**
Clean your hands often with soap and water or hand sanitizer. Stay 6 feet apart from each other at all times. Wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible. Spend time socializing outdoors!

Despite our best efforts, outbreaks and positive tests serve to remind us that none of us are immune to acquiring COVID-19. Our community needs you to stay healthy and our co-workers need us all to avoid illness.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to protect yourselves, our patients, and each other.