

MEMO

Date: May 1, 2020
To: All Health Care Workers
From: **Lanette Siragusa**, Provincial Lead Health System Integration & Quality,
Chief Nursing Officer, Shared Health
Dr. Perry Gray, Provincial Lead Medical Specialist Services,
Chief Medical Officer, Shared Health

Re: COVID-19 – The New Normal

As Manitoba prepares to cautiously relax some restrictions on the COVID-19 public health orders, it remains critical that we all continue to respect social and physical distancing requirements, practice strict hand hygiene, and stay home if you are ill.

The next few weeks will provide all Manitobans with the opportunity to **slowly** move away from some of the restrictions that have been in place over the past several months but it is important to remember that this “new normal” is not business as usual.

It will take some time to define what this “new normal” looks like as we assess and respond to the outcome of the gradual lifting of restrictions. We must each continue to do our part to prevent the spread of this virus, both at work and in our personal lives.

Virtual care

All clinical services that can be done virtually should continue. Increases to in-person visits require careful consideration on the impacts to space, staff resources and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Surgery

A gradual resumption of surgical care will occur at sites across the province, focused on the highest priority patients. This is not a resumption of normal service levels. A phased approach is being implemented to address the highest priority areas first.

Should ongoing assessment of the spread of COVID-19 identify a need to ramp down services, the postponement process used previously will be implemented immediately.

Diagnostics and Laboratory Services

Efforts are underway to begin to resume some services that were postponed five weeks ago. Clinical guidelines have been updated to ensure that high-priority appointments are scheduled

in Diagnostic Imaging and Cardiac Testing. This is not a resumption of normal service levels. A phased approach is being implemented to address the highest priority areas first. Laboratory services need to remain at essential service levels. Should ongoing assessment of the spread of COVID-19 identify a need to ramp down services, the postponement process used previously will be implemented immediately.

Primary Care and Outpatient Clinics

Practices should continue patient screening and use virtual options to reduce in-clinic volumes where appropriate. Ideally, most practices should plan for the provision of 2/3 of their visits to be performed virtually for the immediate future.

Telephone screening prior to appointments, use of appropriate signage and screening upon entry are all tools that can aid in the identification of patients with potential influenza-like illness of COVID-19 symptoms so they can be appropriately managed.

Physicians are reminded that diagnostic and laboratory services remain focused on essential diagnostic testing/investigation for those patients whose immediate care management will be guided by it. The prioritization of tests is being reviewed regularly. Should a non-essential test be deemed necessary by a care provider, a medical on-call professional is available for consult.

PPE

Ongoing efforts to conserve PPE continue. Appropriate use of PPE is a requirement. The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and can be expected to continue to evolve.

Ensuring the availability of needed PPE for the duration of the pandemic is in everyone's interests

Tools to Reduce the Spread

We each have a role in ensuring the success of the gradual reopening of our province.

Social and physical distancing measures as well as strict hand hygiene and staying home when ill continue to be our best tools in fighting the spread of this virus.

Wherever possible, those who are able to work from home should continue to do so unless directed otherwise by their manager.

For those who are on-site at health care facilities throughout the province should ensure physical distancing is maintained a by staying at least two metres apart from coworkers.

- **Visitor restrictions:** suspended access will remain in place. Exceptions continue to require approval.
- **Staff screening:** staff screening will remain in place. Staff are reminded to not come to work if you have any COVID-19 symptoms. Remember to keep your distance as you wait in line to be screened.
- **Social and physical distancing:** In elevators, during meetings and when on break.

Meetings: Wherever possible, continue to conduct business/operational meetings over the phone or internet. [Read more here.](#)

Coffee breaks and lunch: Do not use small lunchrooms, meeting rooms, staff lounges or staircases. Find spaces that allow for the required physical distancing measures to be observed. Disinfect tables with disinfecting wipes between each use.

It remains important that we be vigilant throughout our day-to-day activities both at home and at work. We know there have been many changes that have impacted your daily lives over the last few months and we thank you for your flexibility in quickly adapting to measures that will keep us all safer.