

COVID-19

Provincial Pandemic Planning – Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg (HSC)

The evolving COVID-19 situation has healthcare organizations around the world proactively taking steps to prevent the spread of the virus, and plan for worst-case scenarios.

Manitoba's health system is no different. We know that planning is essential to delivering the best possible care.

As part of the provincial plan to prevent and contain the spread of the virus, all health organizations and service areas in Manitoba were asked to begin planning for anticipated demands, as well as to promote and practice optimal hand hygiene, cough etiquette and appropriate equipment and environmental cleaning.

Provincial guidelines and sector-specific protocols are being regularly updated and all regions and sites have been asked to ensure compliance.

Screening measures are in place and community testing sites are being added to support additional patient demand. Patients and the public continue to be directed to contact Health Links-Info Santé before presenting to an access centre, urgent care or emergency department in order to ensure appropriate precautions are in place when they arrive. Health Links-Info Santé will provide advance notification to a receiving site.

Hospitals across the province will be part of our coordinated provincial effort as we provide care for patients affected by COVID-19. Health authorities and service delivery organizations are finalizing specific plans for the management of COVID-19 patients.

Manitoba's Hospital – Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg

As Manitoba's Hospital, Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg (HSC) cares for the sickest patients in the province each and every day. The site is prepared to look after highly critical COVID-19 patients who may present to the hospital and a site-specific plan has been developed to support the coordinated provincial response.

HSC – and other sites across the province – are [prioritizing fit-testing for N95 respirators](#) for staff most likely to perform [aerosol-generating medical procedures](#) (AGMPs). HSC is limiting entry points to the hospital and ensuring that active screening takes place at all entry points to identify any patients, escorts or visitors who require testing.

Non-essential visits to all Manitoba health care facilities, including HSC, are strongly discouraged at this time as we focus on ensuring the well-being of staff, volunteers, patients and the public.

Additional efforts to reduce exposure and ensure the safety of our patients and staff are being considered an urgent priority, and provincial clinical experts and site leadership are reviewing all protocols and conducting spot checks to ensure appropriate steps are being implemented.

The plan

HSC's COVID-19 plan is flexible and tailored to the population that requires care. It allows for the gradual adjustment of the site's response to factors that may change through the pandemic, including varying patient acuity and volumes.

The plan currently has four levels, and achieves the following principles:

- Appropriate isolation of suspected/confirmed cases in the initial levels;
- As COVID-19 numbers increase, dedicated areas for COVID-19 patients will replace dedicated rooms for COVID-19 patients;
- As the number of patients needing to be screened increases, alternative dedicated areas for screening will be identified, to maximize separation of potential and suspected COVID-19 patients from those visiting the site for non-COVID-19 related health concerns;
- The activation of 735 Notre Dame (the former Women's Pavilion) to facilitate appropriate separation of patients is an option;
- Alternative locations for expanded critical care beds and expanded medicine beds have been mapped out;
- When appropriate, visitor restrictions will be implemented;
- As the need to minimize contact increases, the closure of some entry points will be implemented to ensure appropriate screening immediately upon entry.

Staff and physicians at the site have been participating in Town Halls throughout the latter part of the planning phase. Questions, comments and concerns raised by staff and physicians have informed the phased approach to planning and orientation details will soon be shared with those staff who may be re-assigned to care for COVID-19 patients. This will include training to ensure familiarity with the clinical space(s), equipment and protocols.

More information will be shared in the coming days and weeks as the COVID-19 situation evolves. In the meantime, staff are encouraged to continue practicing proper hand hygiene, screen all patients and visitors for symptoms, and to stay informed. Clinical and site leadership are encouraged to lead their teams with confidence and to share information as it becomes available. As a system, we have been through this before, we have learned from previous outbreaks, and we have high confidence in our ability to respond properly.

Let us all remain focused, diligent and vocal. The engagement of staff and physicians are integral to our coordinated provincial response. We are eager to hear questions and to receive feedback.