

Local Doctors Provide Important Covid-19 Information

2020/03/18 Local Interest



Information on the COVID-19 virus for residents of the Swan Valley

This article is intended to act as a resource for accurate information on the virus and a guide to local services. New information is constantly becoming available, please see the links at the bottom of the article for updated information. This article is not intended to replace medical advice. If you are unwell or uncertain what to do please seek medical attention.

This virus is spreading quickly across the country and **NOW is the time to implement social distancing** and policy to help slow the spread. We want to “flatten the curve” to decrease the peak number of cases at one time, and avoid overwhelming our healthcare system resources.

What is COVID-19?

The world is currently experiencing an outbreak of a new strain of the coronavirus called COVID-19. It started in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and has since been declared a global pandemic. The first case was recorded in Canada on January 25th and the first in Manitoba on March 12th.

Please see https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/coronavirus.pdf for an excellent summary.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms range from mild (fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat) to severe (shortness of breath and breathing difficulties). Older people and those living with chronic health conditions appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill.

How is it spread?

The virus is spread through close contact (within 2 meters/ 6 feet) with an infected person who is coughing or sneezing. You can also get COVID-19 by touching objects contaminated with the virus and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.

How serious is COVID-19?

Fortunately, the majority of cases (~80%) have mild cold/flu symptoms only. The overall mortality rate is estimated to be less than 2%. However, people over 50 and with pre-existing medical conditions are at higher risk for severe infections.

How many cases have there been?

Please see the following sites for an updated list of cases:

Worldwide cases with map:

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

Canadian cases by province: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_coronavirus_pandemic_in_Canada#Cases_by_province

Do I need to be tested for COVID-19?

Currently Covid-19 testing is only being performed on people with respiratory symptoms AND an international travel history within the past 14 days. There is an excellent screening tool available from shared health that will help direct you based on your situation.

Find it here: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>

If you don't have internet access or are unclear on the screening tool then further advice can be obtained from Health Links at 1-888-315-9257. Due to high call volumes they would prefer you access the screening tool before calling.

What can I do if I'm healthy?

Social distancing. This means avoiding unnecessary contact with others to help prevent virus spread.

Some examples include:

Avoid handshakes

Avoid crowded places

Limit physical contact with the elderly and those in poor health

Keep a distance of 2 metres from others wherever possible

Hygiene:

Wash your hands. It seems simple, but it's critically important. Before you eat, after you are in public, or after coughing/sneezing.

Soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizers are acceptable.

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/clean-hand-pamphlet.pdf>

Clean high-touch surfaces like door handles

Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend in your arm

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/respiratory-hygiene-pamphlet.pdf>

Avoid touching your face

What can I do if I have cold or flu symptoms?

Follow the screening tool to see if you require COVID-19 testing. Again the link is: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>

If your illness is mild – stay home and self-isolate. Information on isolating is available

here: https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/coronavirus_selfisolation.pdf

If you need to see a physician non-urgently please call the SVPCC to book an appointment.

If your symptoms require same-day attention then please call the clinic first to see if same day or walk-in appointments are available. Please disclose any respiratory or travel history.

If symptoms require immediate attention please call 911 or present to the emergency department.

What is the Swan Valley Primary Care Centre doing differently during this time?

Virtual visits: Manitoba Health has announced support for virtual visits during the pandemic. So far this means the option to conduct your routine medical appointment by telephone. If you are scheduled for an appointment at the SVPCC you will be contacted prior to the appointment to see if your appointment can be conducted by phone. This is preferable where possible to decrease crowding and exposure to sick patients. We recognize not all visits can be performed this way and are accommodating both at this time.

Advanced Access Clinic (Walk-in): we have modified our walk-in clinic. It continues to operate Mondays and Thursdays from 4-7pm. We still have spots for 33 patients each day. To get an advanced access spot please contact the clinic by phone after 8:30 am on the day of the clinic. The first 33 will be assigned appointment times between 4-7pm. Depending on the issue it may be in person or by phone.

Where can I get more information?

Information is constantly and rapidly changing. Here is a list of current resources:

Screening Tool: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>

Shared Health Site: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/>

Province of Manitoba: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/>

Please take COVID-19 seriously and follow local and provincial recommendations. Everyone has a part to play in preventing the spread.

-Written by Dr. Tyler Burnside on behalf of the Swan River physician group.