

March 15, 2020

**COVID-19
BULLETIN #13**

Three additional presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Manitoba. This brings the number of lab-confirmed positive cases in Manitoba to four and presumptive positive cases to three, for a total of seven cases.

Case five is a man in his 70s. Case six is a woman in her 70s and at this time, it appears this woman was exposed to the virus through recent travel. Case seven is a woman in her 50s. Patient contact and public health investigations are ongoing.

All Manitobans, including health-care providers, are strongly advised to cancel or postpone any non-essential international travel. In addition, public health officials are recommending all international travellers should self-isolate and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after returning to Canada. Work is underway to develop guidelines for screening of Manitoba health-care workers returning to Canada following international travel.

Winnipeg's four dedicated testing sites for COVID-19 have seen 900 patients in the past three days including 268 yesterday. The public is reminded that these sites are not walk-in clinics. International travellers who have developed cold- or flu-like symptoms within 14 days of returning to Canada should contact Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or toll-free at 1-888-315-9257 to be referred for testing at these sites.

Health Links received more than 1,000 calls yesterday. Staffing numbers continue to be increased and technical enhancements are being worked on including an online self-assessment tool that will help Manitobans identify

whether they need to be tested for the virus. It is anticipated this tool will be available in the next few days.

HSC Winnipeg is restricting the number of public entrances to the campus beginning today, so visitors can be properly screened for COVID-19 upon arrival. These restrictions will protect patients who may have underlying medical conditions that put them at greater risk of severe illness due to COVID-19. Patients are now only allowed one visitor at a time. Exceptions will be made at a manager's discretion for special circumstances, such as visitors who require an escort or those going to see a patient nearing the end of their life.

Similar measures are being considered for other health-care facilities throughout the province and at long-term care homes.

Visitors arriving at facilities throughout Manitoba's health system can expect to be screened upon arrival for COVID-19. If visitors are ill or have travelled internationally in the past 14 days, or if they have been instructed to self-monitor or self-isolate, they are strongly encouraged to stay home for the well-being of staff, volunteers, patients and the general public.

CancerCare Manitoba is asking patients with upcoming appointments or tests to call ahead. Cancer patients may be more susceptible to COVID-19 due to weakened immune systems, so appointments and tests may be rescheduled if not considered urgent or patients are not actively being treated for the disease.

Similarly, patients living with kidney disease are also at higher risk of infection. Scheduled dialysis treatments are proceeding as usual for patients who are well. However, dialysis patients experiencing cold- or flu-like symptoms who have returned from international travel in the past 14 days are asked to call Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or toll-free at 1-888-315-9257 for an initial assessment. They are also asked to call their renal unit before leaving home for a dialysis treatment or clinic visit so staff can prepare to treat them in a way that keeps them and others from possibly being exposed to COVID-19.

In keeping with social distancing strategies outlined to Manitobans and in consultation with key stakeholders, public health officials have advised suspending classes in Manitoba kindergarten to Grade 12 schools effective March 23 to April 10. This is being done to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Manitoba.

Public health officials are also advising schools and educational institutions to:

- ensure ill staff and students stay home from school, and support those who are self-isolating at home to ensure they do not fall behind in their studies;
- reduce activities in large groups and crowds;
- increase desk distance between students; and
- consider implementing virtual or online classrooms to reduce the number of people in classrooms and increase distance between staff and students.

Public health officials continue to recommend social distancing measures for all Manitobans including:

- cancelling or postponing any large-scale events (events with more than 250 attendees);
- minimizing prolonged (more than 10 minutes), close (less than two metres) contact between individuals in public;
- avoiding greetings that involve touching such as handshakes;
- disinfecting frequently used surfaces;
- following public health advice related to self-monitoring and self-isolation if you have travelled or have been exposed to someone ill with the virus; and
- avoiding all non-essential travel, as well as crowded places and events.

Employers should review their business continuity plans and take steps to ensure employees can stay home when ill, without facing barriers such as the requirement for sick notes, and work from home if possible. Employers should also discontinue non-essential, work-related travel outside of Manitoba and encourage virtual meetings to reduce prolonged, close contact between individuals.

People are encouraged to take common prevention measures including regular handwashing with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds. Make sure to dry hands thoroughly. Alternatively, people can use an alcohol-based hand cleanser if their hands are not visibly dirty. People should also cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough or sneeze into their sleeve.

Being prepared also means using official sources for the most up-to-date and accurate information. The Manitoba government is also urging media to exercise caution in reporting information related to the evolving COVID-19 situation and to avoid hearsay or speculation, as this can spread misinformation.

For more information, visit www.manitoba.ca/covid19/.

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For more information:

- Public information, contact Manitoba Government Inquiry: 1-866-626-4862 or 204-945-3744.
- Media requests for general information, contact Communications Services Manitoba: 204-945-3765.
- Media requests for ministerial comment, contact Communications and Stakeholder Relations: 204-945-4916.

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