Preparing our Defense

Your cooperation has resulted in some success in our efforts to flatten the curve, leading to the Premier’s announcement about plans to re-open Saskatchewan and prompting the SHA to begin planning to reverse the service slowdown. We thank each of you for your efforts in help us prepare.

However, although modelling numbers for worst case scenario planning are lower than originally expected, we still need to continue planning for a potential surge in cases. The reality is that our health-care system cannot change quickly to a marked increase in demand, if that curve suddenly starts to rise.

Conversion of Community Hospitals to Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Conversion of community hospitals to ALC is one of the measures Integrated Rural Health (IRH) put in place to ensure we can meet potential demand. By converting the purpose of community hospitals in some communities we can protect our most vulnerable populations. Keeping patients and staff safe and healthy is our number one priority.

Temporary conversion to ALC sites was targeted to occur in a phased approach over four to six weeks. The first phase will be completed by Friday, May 8th and involves community hospitals in Kerrobert, Herbert, Preeceville, Broadview, Radville, and Lanigan. The remaining six will follow in subsequent phases with dates yet to be determined.

These six hospitals will be temporarily closed to acute care admissions and will only accept admission to ALC. Emergency services will be temporarily disrupted and will not be available at these facilities. There will be no impact to long term care in integrated facilities. Primary Health Care services will be maintained.

Conversion allows for the movement of ALC patients from tertiary and regional hospitals to create space for potential COVID-19 surge. It also separates COVID and non-COVID pre-acute or post-acute patients in the community in community hospitals to avoid transmission.

IN AN EMERGENCY
CALL 9-1-1

- EMS will be dispatched to respond. EMS will assess the patient, initiate treatment and transport to the most appropriate facility to provide further care for the patient’s illness/injury.
- For non-urgent health, mental health or addictions medical advice or support, call HealthLine 811 toll-free 24 hours per day.

Strengthening our Offense

Community Testing and Assessment

Increasing access to testing and contact tracing efforts further supports the prevention of community transmission. Rural community testing sites and assessment and treatment sites are operating in 16 communities in IRH. You can find listings at saskatchewan.ca/COVID19.
Assessment and Treatment Sites keep low acuity COVID patients out of Emergency Departments and managed in the community, and also assists Family Physicians by helping them provide hands-on assessment if they have determined further investigation is required.

The Importance of Immunizations

Publicly-funded immunizations for infants and school-aged children, pregnant and individuals at high risk have been deemed one of the continuing essential programs in Integrated Rural Health (IRH). Keeping immunization coverage rates high and making sure immunizations are up-to-date is important to help prevent any vaccine preventable diseases during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Health locations across IRH are currently only accepting appointments for immunizations. Please call to schedule an appointment - walk-ins will NOT be accepted.

The safety of all clients is of highest priority when administering vaccinations. To protect clients and staff, Public Health will follow all of the recommended precautions including pre-screening all clients for influenza-like illness and scheduling appointment times to ensure clients are not arriving and departing at the same time.

Strengthening our Defense: Planned Capacity

Conversion to COVID-Ready Hospitals

Changes like conversion to COVID-ready hospitals will only occur when triggers determined through modelling have been reached to ensure safety and maintain access for patients who need our care.

COVID designations are currently not in place for any hospital. There will be a phased approach to conversion that will be determined by the incidence and prevalence of COVID-19 in a community and the surrounding geographic area. Our priority is to care for people as close to home as possible.

As hospitalizations of COVID-19 patients increase, regular hospitalizations of non-COVID patients will continue as normal. By separating COVID-ready and non-COVID facilities we will avoid cross-contamination, decrease the risk of transmission, contain the virus, and prevent patients admitted for non-COVID-19 issues from becoming infected. All emergency departments continue to remain open in hospitals designated COVID-ready and non-COVID.

Stay the Course

Residents are encouraged to remain vigilant in following Public Health directives to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and reduce the number of new cases across the province. The continued cooperation of the public is allowing municipalities and community organizations to cautiously resume spring activities such as community gardens and community clean-up activities.