

# Living with COVID-19

## Transition of Saskatchewan's Public Health Framework for the Continued Management of COVID-19

February 3, 2022

# Omicron: Current Context

- The current Omicron variant is different than previous variants. It is more transmissible with a very short incubation period. Most cases are asymptomatic or present with very mild symptoms.
- Currently a larger proportion of the population is vaccinated compared to previous waves. There is widespread adoption of booster doses, particularly in vulnerable settings such as long-term care.
- People who are vaccinated may become infected and infectious to others. Fully vaccinated individuals with a booster dose appear to have greater protection from severe illness.

# Omicron: Current Context

- Omicron is a less severe illness with widespread community transmission.
- Most cases can be effectively self-managed.
- Current increasing number of hospitalizations will peak and subside in the coming days.

# Living with COVID: Public Health Role

- COVID-19 will be monitored and managed similarly to other respiratory viruses (e.g., influenza), preserving public health and health care capacity for preventing and treating severe cases.
  - Identify locations where increased transmission may be occurring in order to inform public health interventions.
  - Make timely and evidence informed actions on outbreaks.
  - Monitor for signals of variants of concern with evidence of vaccine escape or increased severity that may require enhanced measures.
  - Track epidemiology trends of severe COVID-19 including risk factors and distribution.
  - To inform the public and medical community about COVID-19.

# Living with COVID: Management and Surveillance of COVID-19

- This establishes a path forward that prepares for living with COVID-19 on an ongoing basis, including:
  1. A public shifting to self-management of COVID-19:
    - self-monitoring
    - self-testing
    - self-care, seeking support from primary health care as required.
  2. Testing, case and outbreak management limited to high-risk settings and severe cases.
  3. Epidemiological monitoring continues according to established processes for respiratory illnesses with data reporting once per week, transitioning to community-based surveillance reporting.

# Living with COVID – PCR Testing

- Starting February 7, PCR testing must be arranged via HealthLine 811.
  - PCR testing for priority populations only.
  - If qualifying criteria is met, HealthLine 811 makes testing appointment.
  - If criteria is not met, HealthLine 811 will recommend use of rapid antigen tests and self-monitoring.

# PCR Testing Priority Populations

- Hospitalized patients
- High risk populations including residents in long term care and personal care homes and congregate living facilities
- Priority symptomatic persons including health care and essential workers
- People living or working in remote First Nation and Metis communities
- Surgical, oncology patients
- Pregnant patients
- Newborns
- Symptomatic immunocompromised individuals

**A complete list of priority populations can be found at [saskatchewan.ca/covid-19](https://saskatchewan.ca/covid-19).**

# Living with COVID: Case Management

- Shift public health investigation and reporting from all lab-confirmed cases to the highest risk settings and severe cases.
- Shift to a “self-management” approach. Support the public with the tools and resources to take appropriate action including self-management and self-isolation in response to positive test results and self-monitoring following exposure to COVID.



# Living with COVID: Case Management

- Effective immediately, case management in high-risk settings only.
  - Hospitals
  - Long-term care and integrated facilities
  - Personal care homes
  - Correctional facilities
  - Shelters
  - Group homes
- Public posting of outbreaks in long-term and personal care homes at [saskatchewan.ca/covid-19](https://saskatchewan.ca/covid-19).
- Ceasing outbreak reporting for other settings: mass gatherings/events, places of worship, daycares, educational institutions and workplaces.

# Living with COVID: Surveillance/Reporting

- Epidemiological monitoring continues according to established processes for respiratory illnesses.
- Effective the week of February 7, COVID-19 data transitioning from daily to weekly reporting.

# Living with COVID: Surveillance/Reporting

- In April, COVID-19 surveillance will transition to a community-based respiratory illness profile suitable for decision making and post-pandemic planning.
- Public epidemiological reports will be produced on a monthly basis.

# Living with COVID-19: The Path Forward

- While the current public health order remains in place, beginning this shift will enable public health to continue to support residents with meaningful self-management tools while prioritizing high risk populations based on reliable epidemiological information.

# Prevent COVID-19 Transmission

**Living with COVID requires all residents to continue the preventative measures we know to prevent transmission.**

- Immediately self-isolate and self-test with even the mildest cold- or flu-like symptoms.
- Wear your best mask whenever you are outside your home or when meeting friends and family you know to be at high risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes.
- Get vaccinated, including your third/booster dose as soon as you are eligible.
- Self-monitor, self-test and self-manage to prevent COVID-19 transmission.