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News Releases



# Media Bulletin

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March 12, 2020

## NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) BULLETIN #8

Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL) and public health officials are advising Manitobans of the first presumptive positive case of COVID-19 in the province.

A woman in her 40s who lives in the area of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has tested positive for COVID-19. At this time, it appears the individual was exposed to the virus through recent travel to the Philippines. The individual is recovering at home in stable condition.

As of March 11, 403 tests have been completed for COVID-19 in Manitoba.

A pandemic has now been declared by the World Health Organization, and social distancing strategies are now being recommended to all Manitobans to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Those at the greatest risk of severe outcomes include those over 65 years of age, those with underlying medical conditions and those with compromised immune systems. Public health officials are also reminding all Manitobans to frequently wash their hands, cough and sneeze into their sleeves and to stay home when sick.

Social distancing strategies for all Manitobans include:

- minimizing prolonged (more than 10 minutes), close (less than two metres) contact between other 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
- considering avoiding travel, crowded places and events, especially if you are at higher risk.

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 large-group, crowded activities;
- increase desk distance between students; and
- consider implementing virtual or online classrooms, which reduces the number of people in classrooms and increases distance between staff and students.

Employers should review their business continuity plans and take steps to ensure their 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 consider:

- discontinuing non-essential work related travel outside of Manitoba and

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- encouraging virtual meetings to reduce prolonged, close contact between individuals.

Manitobans are strongly advised to review travel plans given the evolving risk throughout many parts of the world and Canada. Frequently review the Government of Canada's COVID-19 related travel advisories at [www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html).

The following measures are in place:

- All respiratory specimens submitted to the provincial lab will be tested for COVID-19 (even if COVID-19 testing was not ordered by the health-care provider).
- Travelers returning from Italy, Iran and the province of Hubei are asked to **self-isolate** for 14 days after departing the area.
- All returning international travellers should **self-monitor** for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days after returning to Canada. Travellers who develop cold or flu-like symptoms within 14 days of returning to Canada should contact Health Links-Info Santé to determine if testing for COVID-19 should be considered. In cases where testing is not recommended, they should self-isolate until they are well.

Any person concerned about their exposure to or risk of having COVID-19 should first call Health Links-Info Sante at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free) to ensure they receive medical advice appropriate to their specific health concerns.

Starting March 12, individuals in Winnipeg directed by Health Links-Info Sante to be tested for COVID-19 will be asked to visit a community screening location. The first two community screening locations will open today, at Access Winnipeg West (at 280 Booth Dr.) and Access Fort Garry (135 Plaza Dr.).

Screening will be available at these locations from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. on weekdays and until 4 p.m. on weekends. Those who require screening after hours will still be directed to urgent care sites and emergency departments. In addition to screening, these centres remain open for regularly scheduled clinic activities.

People living outside Winnipeg who are concerned about their exposure to or risk of having COVID-19 should call Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free) for further information.

For additional preparedness details, visit:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>.

Being prepared also means seeking official sources of information to ensure the most up-to-date and accurate information is being used. MHSAL 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 the most up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit the Manitoba public health website at [www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/](http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/). For health questions or more information on respiratory illness, Manitobans can phone Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free).