



This communication is intended to provide timely and important information to our municipal leaders, health system partners, health and hospital foundations, and other community based organizations. Please feel free to distribute among your stakeholders as appropriate.

A message from our CEO, Scott Livingstone



Over the past couple of weeks, we have watched much of the world's attention turn from the COVID-19 pandemic to focus on systemic racism and violence against visible minorities.

Racism is present in our province and we need to be frank with one another, racism exists within our health-care system.

That is why we have been working hard since the creation of the SHA to put in place programs, policies and processes aimed at eliminating racism and creating a culture within our organization where we all see diversity as a strength. From day one, we made this a priority by creating a dedicated First Nations and Métis Health unit within the SHA. We are only at the start of our journey, but by building a culturally responsive health system, we can eliminate the gap in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Saskatchewan and meet [our commitment to truth and reconciliation](#).

There is no doubt we need to do more. We have people working in our health-care system who come from all corners of the globe and there is no doubt many of them experience prejudice because of the colour of their skin. This is very disheartening, since they have come to serve others. It must stop.

So it is up to all of us to take action. In our society, we are not all the same. That should be celebrated. We need to treat each other with respect for our differences and with a shared commitment to eliminate racism and prejudice. Let's get there together.

Updates to Family Presence Guidelines

In maternal units:

- Effective immediately, expectant mothers and families across Saskatchewan will now be permitted to have two designated family members/support persons present during their birthing experience. Designated family members/support persons are chosen by the mother and family and may include but are not limited to partners, family members, coaches, doulas or cultural support persons. The [Family Presence Guidelines and algorithm for acute care](#) have been updated to reflect this change.

Additional updates:

- Craft supplies can be delivered to residents/patients if they are packaged and can be wiped down with a disinfectant wipe
- Food that is made at home can be brought in for residents/patients if it is packaged in a container that can be wiped down with a disinfectant wipe





Demystifying COVID-19 Testing

Knowing where to go and what to do:

Testing and assessment sites for COVID-19 have been set up around the province so that if you need a test, there are fewer miles to travel to get one. There are also options including drive-in testing at some sites.

The testing site you'll be attending will call to book an appointment. You will be provided with the address of the site, as every effort has been made to only share the location with those who need to know. Before you even arrive, a staff member will walk you through what you can expect.

Some patients may feel nervous about getting tested, but staff will alleviate concerns. "The instructions were clear and very specific as to what to expect when I arrived at the testing site. This helped to relieve some of my anxiety," said one patient.

The test is also confidential, as patients are protected by the Saskatchewan Health Authority privacy rules. Test results are not shared with anyone, even if you test positive. You will be required to share your close contacts in the event of a positive outcome, but we do not disclose your positive test to your contacts.

It's easy to get a referral. Just speak to your physician or nurse practitioner over the phone or call HealthLine 811 to get a referral for testing, so call today if you have any concerns related to COVID-19 and your health.



Testing site procedures:



If you need a COVID-19 test in Saskatchewan, you will be referred to a testing site.

"Some of our patients are worried they'll pick up COVID-19 from our testing site if they haven't already got it. But it's probably the safest place they could possibly be because of all the protocols we follow," notes Darcie Anderson, who is the Operations Lead at the Humboldt Community testing and assessment site.

There are many procedures in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within the testing facilities. Spaces are set up so surfaces are touched as little as possible. All staff wear and properly dispose of personal protective equipment (PPE) and do a deep cleaning of any surface touched by anyone, such as both the inside and outside door handles and even the chairs, and this occurs after every single patient is seen.

"I was impressed with the cleanliness and details for hand hygiene and infection control protocols," one patient reported after visiting the site in Humboldt. "I really noticed every detail was taken into account - even down to the placement of the chairs and how to enter and leave the building. I honestly thought... wow, this is really the safest place to be working!"

If you have concerns about COVID-19 and your health, speak to your family physician, a nurse practitioner or call HealthLine 811 about a referral for confidential COVID-19 test.



Why to get tested and what the test is like:

We all know the importance of physical distancing and regularly washing our hands, but testing is also an essential component to controlling the spread of COVID-19. Lately, we have been hearing more questions and concerns about getting tested, and the possible stigma attached to a positive diagnosis.

"It's natural to be concerned about COVID-19," says Dr. David Torr, Saskatchewan Health Authority's interim Senior Medical Health Officer. "What we don't want is to stigmatize those who are getting tested or those who have a positive test result. This only leads to people not getting tested."

"When I arrived (at the testing site) I was a little nervous and embarrassed as I felt I should have done a better job at protecting myself and shouldn't have gotten sick in the first place," is what one patient reported feeling.

No one should feel embarrassed. COVID-19 can spread quite easily and anyone can get it, so we all need to do our part by watching for symptoms and getting tested if we experience one or more symptoms, even if they are mild.

"This is definitely a case where ignorance is not bliss," Torr noted. "Not knowing you're carrying this virus means you can be easily spreading it to those around you without knowing, including the people you love the most. It really is a selfless act to get a test. And we should treat it as such."

Testing is voluntary, quick and safe, so call HealthLine 811 if you have questions about COVID-19 and your health.

The test itself – what to expect

The most common test used in the province is the throat and nares swab, which involves swabbing the back of the throat and around each nostril.

"It just goes to the back of the throat, and is just a tickle in your nose," explains Darcie Anderson, who is the Operations Lead the testing site in Humboldt. "The test is very quick."

"The nurse doing the testing...explained the test briefly, and said to put my mask down to my chin and tilt my head back and open my mouth for her to swab the back of my throat and then each nostril and then put my mask back up. Very quickly and efficiently done," stated one patient.

That can be said for testing visits on the whole.

"From the time our clients arrive at our testing site, are tested, and then on their way is normally five to six minutes," says Anderson. "Though what every site is able to offer varies, we have the ability here sometimes to conduct testing while patients remain in their vehicle, so people don't have to even come in."

Testing sites are designed to have patients in and out efficiently, privately and as safely as possible for all involved, one patient reported.





Our People, Our Communities

Technology grant to enhance visitation for Regina NICU

Hospitals of Regina Foundation (HRF) is always looking for meaningful and impactful projects to fund in Regina's hospitals. A recent response to a national call for grant applicants (sponsored by Pampers) resulted in wonderful news for the Foundation and ultimately the NICU at the Rawlco Centre for Mother Baby Care. Hospitals of Regina Foundation is honoured to be the only Saskatchewan hospital foundation selected for this generous \$25,000 grant, to be used to invest in a NICVIEW camera system. This system will allow parents and family members to monitor their little one(s) remotely in those worrisome hours when they cannot be there in person – especially in these times when visitors are limited in our hospitals. Thank you, Pampers and thank you HRF! [Read more about it here.](#)

COVID-19: University of Saskatchewan sends support through partnership

A longstanding partnership was strengthened recently when the University of Saskatchewan (USask) approached the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) with a willingness to assist in COVID-19 planning.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the province this spring, the USask Crisis Operations team stepped up to assist the SHA in many ways, including providing supplies, equipment, and facilities to aid in pandemic planning. Most notably, Merlis Belsher Place was identified as a field hospital location in Saskatoon. Ongoing planning and construction are continuing which will result in a 125 bed capacity field hospital to treat COVID-19 patients.

"The support we have received from USask throughout the pandemic has been tremendous." says Terri Nixey, Field Hospital co-lead. "It further cements our partnership going forward."

The SHA extends its sincerest thanks to the University of Saskatchewan. Read the full story [here.](#)

Westcap sends virtual hugs to long-term care residents across the province

COVID-19 has left many seniors in long-term care homes feeling lonely and disconnected from their families and friends. To help reconnect our residents to their families, the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) has partnered with Westcap Mgt. Ltd. (Westcap) to help them reconnect virtually. Westcap has donated \$250,000 towards the purchase of over 330 iPads, and the cost of the data plans. The iPads has distributed these devices to SHA long-term care homes across our province. [Take a look here](#) at how they are impacting our seniors.

The Heart of the Matter

[Four Directions Answers the Call](#)

For people who have housing instability, live in poverty or struggle with mental health or addictions, and like to do most things face-to-face, accessing health care services and other lifesaving programs can be difficult at the best of times. During a pandemic, it's even more challenging, making virtual and remote service delivery inaccessible and putting them further at risk.





That’s why the staff at Four Directions Community Health Centre in Regina applied for a grant to help supply phones to vulnerable people in their care. These phones allow them to stay in contact with medical advice and services.

We know there are many more clients in need, so more phones are needed and SHA staff are being asked to help.

"If you have an old phone in your junk drawer or a tablet you no longer use, get it to us at Bolt Mobile. As long as it's got a camera, we'll refurbish it and get it into the hands of someone in need," said Kevin Kindrachuk, Director of Marketing, Bolt Mobile.

Centenarians form Wise Woman Wisdom Club



Six centenarians born between 1912 and 1918 are the founding members of the Wise Women Wisdom Club at the Langenburg Centennial Care Home.

Activity Director Carol Schaab recognized the collective wisdom the women brought to the care home and started the club to bring the group members together on a monthly basis to reminisce and share their life experiences.

"The oldest woman will be 108 on June 16 and the 'baby' will be 101 this July," Schaab said. "That is a lot of wisdom to share."

Helping clients navigate new norms in children’s therapy



Staff in the Children’s Therapy Program in Yorkton have gone the extra mile to prepare children for the new normal that will be associated with appointments amidst COVID-19.

"We typically work with very young children and those with physical and cognitive delays. It is important that children be comfortable in the clinic setting to be able to provide effective treatment," said Linda Spracklin-Cross, Manager, Primary Health Care Manager, Children's Therapy Program/KidsFirst.

Prior to their appointment, each family receives a social story – a short description using situation-specific photos, information and a child-friendly narrative to help them become familiar with the new and different processes and procedures to expect at their first appointment following the resumption of therapy services. "Children may respond negatively to changes in routine and be frightened of staff in masks. We felt sending the social story ahead of time would ease fear and anxiety," Spracklin-Cross explained.



Partnership Results in Donation to the Food Bank

Salus Global and the Saskatchewan Health Authority’s Maternal and Children’s Provincial Program formed a partnership through moreOB, a comprehensive patient safety and quality improvement program for interprofessional obstetrical teams.

On May 5, the Salus Global team expressed their gratitude for the hard work that has gone into dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Healthcare leaders and teams across the country, including the province of Saskatchewan, have shown determination, resilience, and selflessness in navigating the challenges associated with the highly fluid situation,” says Heather Coutts, Lead Facilitator of moreOB.



As a token of their appreciation, Salus Global donated \$3,600 to the Food Banks of Saskatchewan in honour of the Maternal units across the province.

Thank you, Salus Global for this generous donation for those in need and for your partnership, patience and understanding as we stand strong together.