



| COVID-19 | The Impact of the Unvaccinated: like falling dominos

How can ICU shortages and full hospitals across the province affect you if you don't need hospital or ICU care?

Simple – it's like falling dominoes.

Health-care resources are finite. We only have so many doctors, so many nurses, so many pieces of specialized equipment. When certain care is under demand – such as ICU or inpatient care for COVID-19 positive patients during this fourth wave – the system must adjust to provide that in-demand care. A domino falls and hits another.

Pressures on acute care have a system-wide impact.

For example, say there is an increase in COVID-positive patients coming into a rural hospital, so an extra physician is assigned daily to the hospital to support the increase in hospital admissions and acutely ill patients presenting to emergency. This means appointments at the local clinic have to be re-assigned to other providers, in-person consults change to phone visits, and non-urgent appointments are postponed.

To allow this adjustment, resources have to come from somewhere. Domino hits domino hits domino.

We all need to do our part and share the responsibility to help our health system. The current pandemic of the unvaccinated is currently creating unprecedented pressures on acute care and starting to tip over more and more dominoes. Service reductions are being put in place across the healthcare system to support the capacity required to care for people in ICUs today.



Get your vaccine. Wash your hands. Wear a mask in public spaces. Physically distance from others. Limit the number of contacts you have.

Stop more dominoes from falling.

| COVID-19 | Giving Thanks for a Safe Long Weekend

As we prepare for the Thanksgiving weekend in the midst of the fourth wave of COVID-19 in the province, the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) Medical Health Officers (MHO) are reminding the public that there are steps you can take to stay safe while gathering with friends and family. Our efforts this weekend will be an important part of our work to break the chain of transmission and prevent any further pressures on an already strained health-care system.



The most important thing you can do for yourself and your family is to get a COVID vaccine. It is still our best weapon as we try to contain the spread of the virus. If you are not vaccinated we suggest that you avoid gathering with friends and family this weekend as you are putting them at risk.



It is especially important to be vigilant while celebrating Thanksgiving as currently, the primary source of transmission of COVID-19 in the province is happening through household gatherings. If you are meeting inside, be aware of the vaccination status of all of your guests and remember that children under the age of 12 are at a higher risk as they cannot be vaccinated at this time.

Other things you may want to consider include meeting and greeting outdoors as much as possible. While the risk of transmission is not zero, it is much lower than meeting inside. Remember that closed quarters and shared food service remains at a high risk for transmission. And if you are meeting in a public place like a restaurant or at a public facility please follow all masking and proof of vaccination rules.

Lastly, while our recommendations are speaking to the Thanksgiving Day weekend, it is important advice to follow everyday as we move forward in our battle with COVID-19.

| COVID-19 | Discontinuation of Asymptomatic PCR COVID Tests

On Tuesday Sept. 28, 2021, the Ministry of Health [announced](#) that the Saskatchewan Health Authority would be discontinuing asymptomatic PCR COVID tests in response to the high demand the SHA is experiencing for testing, which is due to the resurgence of the virus and demand for proof of a negative COVID test for travel, work or business entry requirements.

The SHA's Laboratory Medicine and Testing teams have put together an [information sheet](#) for the public.

Anyone using the SHA Testing Sites to acquire proof of a negative COVID-19 test will be asked to access private fee for service COVID testing companies within Saskatchewan.

Streamlining testing within the SHA to symptomatic and select asymptomatic testing will ensure a rapid response to outbreak manage and reduce the spread of COVID-19. The SHA remains focused on providing laboratory services for patients when they need it most.



/COVID-19/ Safe Family Presence & Visiting Continues with New Medical Masking Requirement in Long Term Care

With increasing COVID-19 cases in Saskatchewan, and in an effort to further minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission and its variants, effective immediately, the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) is expanding its mandatory medical masking protocol.

Families and visitors in SHA long-term care homes and affiliates will now be required to wear a medical mask provided by the long-term care home **at all times**, not just when outside of residents' rooms. This masking protocol applies to both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals and applies to both single and multi-resident rooms. This change aligns with the latest Government of Saskatchewan Public Health Order. As the number of outbreaks in long-term care increases and the number of residents infected with COVID-19 and its variants continues to increase, additional safety precautions, including mandatory masking in resident rooms, are needed.

Long-term care residents are not required to mask in their own rooms, as this is their home, but are encouraged to mask when outside their room and in common indoor areas.

The requirement for families and visitors to mask within SHA acute facilities continues.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority is urgently requesting co-operation from families and visitors to properly wear medical masks at all times within health-care facilities and long-term care homes. We know that it is essential for patients and long-term care residents to be supported by their loved ones while receiving care; masking of family and visitors is one of the ways we are able to support safe family presence.

Free medical masks will be provided at screening stations when entering a long-term care home. Family members or visitors must:

- wear the mask so it fully covers their nose, mouth and chin;
 - perform hand hygiene before and after you put on your mask; and
 - keep your mask on at all times, and refrain from lowering it to talk.
- To prevent the spread of COVID-19 and its variants, SHA will also continue to:
- ask everyone to complete health screening and perform hand hygiene before they enter;
 - offer rapid COVID testing (results available in 15 minutes);
 - encourage full vaccination and physical distancing; and
 - monitor local spread of the virus.

All health-care workers must continue to put on a medical mask upon entry to any SHA building or facility and continue to wear it at all times and in all areas, unless eating and/or drinking.

Those who refuse to comply with masking requirements may be asked to leave.



The SHA continues to strongly encourage all Saskatchewan residents 12 years of age and older to be immunized with both doses. COVID-19 variants are continuing to develop and spread, and are more transmissible than the initial COVID-19 virus. Vaccines are proving to be effective in protecting individuals from serious illness against these variants, and high vaccination rates in our province will help curb the spread. Vaccination is available through participating pharmacies or at a [SHA COVID-19 vaccine clinics](#).

| COVID-19 | One Family's Experience: A case study in virus transmission

Ever wonder if COVID-19 vaccines work? Ask the Wiebe family. The Saskatoon residents had a textbook experience with the virus.

“Our experience lines up exactly with the current data on mRNA vaccine efficacy at preventing both infection and more severe illness,” wrote Nathan Wiebe in a Facebook post.

Nathan and his wife, Renee, decided their eligible family members should get vaccinated for COVID-19 after one of his co-workers – a previously healthy person – died from the virus.

“We are a large family who live in a small space and we do a lot of wrestling, cuddling, scratching, fighting, five-kids-to-a-couch when we watch a movie, etcetera, so when one of us gets sick, we all get it,” said Nathan.

About six weeks after the eligible family members began to get immunized, the virus swept through the Wiebe household.

Five of their seven children are under the age of 12 and not eligible to be vaccinated. Nathan said although their age range was at the lowest risk to get COVID-19, they were all hit hard.

“High fevers, out of commission for a number of days, throwing up. All tested positive for the Delta variant.”

Their two older children had a different experience. Their 13-year-old was fully vaccinated; their 12-year-old had received one of two doses. Neither had any symptoms, but as a precaution went for COVID-19 testing anyway. Both tested negative.

Renee, who is fully vaccinated, also had no COVID-19 symptoms and tested negative for the virus. Nathan, on the other hand, who is also fully vaccinated, developed a low fever, a runny nose and minor body aches for a couple of days. After testing negative three times, his fourth test showed a positive result.

“Our family is a small sample size, but our experience jives with the published vaccine test data which shows that mRNA vaccines have a 75 to 85 per cent chance of preventing infection completely for the Delta variant. In our case, three out of four of our vaccinated family members did not get infected.



“Manufacturers also claim a 95 per cent chance of significantly reduced severity of illness. This is also true for us. My illness was less severe than all five of the infected kids, despite my being in a category 100 times more at risk of severe illness,” said Nathan, who describes himself as sedentary and overweight.



Nathan and Renee Wiebe and their seven children in a photo taken last fall.

Nathan said he and Renee are sharing their story because, as people of faith, they would like others in their community to understand why they believe vaccination is the right choice.

“We are disappointed to hear when other people in faith communities are skeptical of medical science or science in general, or are inclined to believe that gratefully accepting a vaccine to fight an illness is somehow in conflict with entrusting their health to God,” said Nathan.

“We believe that both the science behind modern medicine and the hard-working people in the medical community are a gift from God, and that vaccines are the way out of this pandemic.”

/ COVID-19 / My COVID Story: Golf Champ & Long-Hauler Calls on Unvaccinated to “Get Poked”

Kathy Ziglo has a message for COVID-19 doubters and for those who remain unvaccinated.

“Getting COVID-19 is not the way you want to learn about the disease,” says the COVID survivor and [two-time Saskatchewan amateur women’s golf champion](#).

“If you can get vaccinated and it takes away some of the severe things that can happen, take the opportunity. I wouldn’t want anyone else to have to deal with it. Just protect yourselves.”



Kathy Ziglo spent 14 days in hospital with COVID-19.

Life as Ziglo knew it pre-COVID-19 has changed drastically. It’s only now Ziglo is grasping how close to death the disease brought her, and how much further she needs to go before she feels more like her former self.



Ziglo, who is in charge of new home construction for Reliance Greggs Saskatoon, began to develop symptoms of the virus in November 2020. She believes she got COVID-19 from her partner, Patty Hersikorn, who had attended a small curling bonspiel in late October, prior to vaccines being available in the province.

While Hersikorn had a tickle in her throat and little else, Ziglo's experience was at the other end of the spectrum. It started with gastrointestinal issues, progressed to a 14-day stay in St. Paul's Hospital where she was told to inform her family of her final wishes, resulted in three months of home recuperation and continues to this day with a whole range of symptoms.

Ziglo said her memory and concentration have taken a hit. When she was first discharged, "every time I turned around I forgot things. Common words, people's names would be gone. Patty said it was like playing charades [to understand what she was talking about]."

When she returned to work in March, she'd carry a notebook to keep track of her thoughts. While this is no longer necessary, she said she still needs to follow up on requests immediately or risk forgetting to follow up altogether.

She continues to work on her strength and stamina. Admittedly, she did not spend the summer in the gym but rather enjoying life, and will start to focus on strength training this fall.

"I'm normally an active person – I play badminton, pickle ball, walk the dogs," she said.

To date, she has yet to recover her strength and, although can walk long distances, if presented with any incline, she is winded immediately.

Where she could once easily carry 30 pounds, anything more than 15 pounds now winds her.

She no longer enjoys sitting around a fire because the smoke causes her lungs to hurt, and she can no longer ignore air quality warnings.

She's more easily frustrated, a fact she blames on enduring fatigue.

With the support of her employer, she's adjusted her work hours to accommodate her need for more sleep. She now goes to work at 9 a.m., instead of 8 a.m., and generally spends an entire day on the weekend in bed.

Known as a golf firebrand in her younger days, she still enjoys a round of golf but COVID has taken a few yards off her drive. "From one round to the next, I can see large differences in how far I can hit the golf ball – it is not uncommon to be a three club difference from day to day."

Curling is a no-go until at least January 2022 and maybe longer as she simply cannot handle the exertion of sweeping.

"Your brain and body take a shit-kicking," she said.

Ziglo said she's begun to talk to a counsellor to help her process what's happened to her. She's also seeing a chiropractor, and receiving acupuncture and massage because her whole body aches.



“I need people to know that just because a person looks okay, we’re fighting a lot you don’t know about. I don’t feel bad for myself – things happen. But when I have good friends say they wish they would get COVID to build immunity, I don’t understand their thinking. This is not just a flu. When you see people hospitalized and dying, and there is a remedy available that has proven to protect us, why wouldn’t you go get the poke? You need to get vaccinated.”

/COVID-19/ You asked, we answered

Question: Do I still need the vaccine even after I’ve had COVID-19?

Answer: Yes, absolutely. If you’ve previously had a COVID-19 infection, you can and should be fully vaccinated. We don’t know yet how long you are protected after COVID-19 infection, or how strong that protection is. We do know that being fully vaccinated remains one of the most effective ways to protect our families, communities and ourselves against COVID-19 and its variants. Vaccines, in combination with public health and individual measures, will reduce the spread of COVID-19. Vaccination is not a cure, but it is your best defense.

FIGHT THE FLU

Protect your clients and your family this flu season.
Plan your flu shot today at www.4flu.ca



Flu Campaign Critical to Prevent Additional System Pressure

The 2021-22 influenza immunization campaign has the potential to have significant impact during the current COVID-19 surge and the resulting pressure on the health-care system. Given the ongoing challenges and demands that the pandemic continues to place on the delivery of health-care services, influenza immunization is critical to prevent any additional pressure on hospitals and health-care providers.

“Influenza is still a concern for health-care providers in this province, and should be a concern for the general public as well,” noted Dr. Tania Diener, COVID-19 Immunization Co-Chief, Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) for the Saskatchewan Health Authority. “There are similarities between COVID-19 and influenza in terms of symptoms, so receiving vaccines to protect yourself from the flu and from COVID-19 – which will very likely keep you from becoming seriously ill and needing hospital care – are important at this time, when a surge in COVID-19 cases has resulted in increased hospital and ICU admissions.”

The flu vaccine will be available in Saskatchewan at SHA booked flu clinics, physician offices and community pharmacies across the province.



New this year and starting Oct. 5, Saskatchewan residents will be able to book individual or group appointments (up to a maximum of six at one time) at SHA flu clinics online through the new [SHA patient booking system](#) or by phone by calling the SASKVAX line – 1-833-727-5829. COVID-19 vaccine will also be available at most SHA public flu clinics.

Watch a video on how to use the patient booking system [here](#).

Patients looking for both the flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccination only require a single appointment in the SHA booking system. Health providers are trained to offer both vaccines to those eligible to receive them in the same appointment time, and it is safe to get them at the same time.

As in previous years, [4flu.ca](#) is the source of public information related to the influenza campaign, including details on walk-in and booked clinic dates and locations and information on booking appointments.

A complete listing of flu clinics offered by the Saskatchewan Health Authority, which begin Oct. 12, can be easily accessed at [www.4flu.ca](#) or by calling SASKVAX (1-833-727-5829).

What is the Flu?

The flu, or influenza, is a common respiratory illness caused by a virus. It affects thousands of Canadians each year during flu season, which typically runs from November to April.

Like COVID-19, the effect on those who contract influenza is varied – they can have no symptoms, can get only mildly ill, or they can get very sick and require acute care.

Flu symptoms are very similar to those of COVID-19 and may appear one to four days after exposure to the influenza virus. Symptoms generally include fever, cough, muscle aches and pains. Other common symptoms include headache, chills, fatigue, loss of appetite, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose.

Influenza is generally not a virus that affects the digestive system; however, some people, especially children, may experience diarrhea or nausea and vomiting.

Similar to COVID-19, there is a period where those infected with the influenza virus can spread it to others, typically starting one day before the first symptoms show until approximately five days after the first symptoms. Most people recover from the flu in seven to 10 days.

While COVID-19 and influenza do share some similarities, they are not the same virus.

“It is very important to get your flu shot to protect you and those around you, especially vulnerable populations such as the elderly and those with underlying conditions from the Influenza virus. It is particularly important during a pandemic when the novel coronavirus and variants, such as Delta, are circulating at the same time,” says Dr. Tania Diener, COVID-





19 Immunization Co-Chief, Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) of the Saskatchewan Health Authority. “Getting your flu shot also minimizes the spread, reduces the risk of developing serious illness and death, and reduces potential hospitalizations related to influenza which would place additional pressure on hospitals that are already under significant demand due to COVID-19.”

For information about flu season in Saskatchewan including a list of flu clinics in your area, check out 4flu.ca and this [Influenza fact sheet](#) from the Government of Saskatchewan. For more information regarding COVID-19, visit the [Government of Saskatchewan’s COVID-19 site](#).

| COVID-19 | COVID-19 Community Champion Toolkit

COVID-19 continues to impact every community in Saskatchewan. From prevention and safety to testing and vaccination, every resident, business and organization plays a part in helping to manage and move past the pandemic. You are the “Community Champions” of our province.

In order to assist communities, businesses and organizations with managing the pandemic, the Saskatchewan Health Authority has designed a “Community Champions Toolkit”. The toolkit contains self-service tools for addressing common communications needs related to COVID-19 vaccines and immunization. These resources will help provide valuable information and guidance necessary for managing COVID-19 at the local level. It is our hope that by providing a centralized set of resources we can help mitigate misinformation and assist communities to implement consistent practices and communication.

Please note that the materials in this toolkit will be periodically revised and updated as additional information, processes and tools are developed. Please bookmark this link check regularly for updates.

View the toolkit and find additional resources at:

<https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca/covid-19-community-champions-toolkit>



| COVID-19 | QUICK LINKS:

[Public Health Orders](#)

[Vaccine Update](#)

[Testing Information](#)