

Masking requirements to be lifted in most health-care settings

May 3, 2023

Masking requirements across Manitoba's health-care system will be lifted next week in most acute, long-term and community settings, Shared Health announced today.

The change, which applies to most visitors and patients entering health-care facilities across the province, will occur May 10 as the health system continues its gradual return to pre-pandemic practices. Individuals who are ill will still be asked to wear a mask when seeking care and should refrain from visiting or accompanying a loved one receiving care.

"The changes in masking requirements are based on advice given by infection prevention and control experts and reflect the changes we've seen with virus transmission in our province over the past year," said Monika Warren, Shared Health's COO of provincially coordinated health services and its chief nursing officer. "Care settings across the province will continue to be mask-friendly. Masks will be available to those who wish to wear them."

Warren noted these changes will not apply in settings where care is being provided to particularly vulnerable populations, including cancer patients and transplant recipients. Masking requirements in these locations will be clearly indicated with signage and the requirement will apply to health-care workers, visitors and all patients who are able to tolerate wearing a mask.

"Masks continue to be an effective way of limiting virus transmission," said Warren. "For individuals experiencing a significant illness or health event, we want to ensure the environments they visit within our facilities offer them every possible measure to protect their health and wellness."

Medical masks will be available at facility or unit entrances and health care workers will continue to have access to both medical masks and N95 respirators, with staff expected to return to using routine practices and additional precautions to gauge risk and select appropriate PPE. The move follows similar changes in other Canadian jurisdictions over the past month.

Warren noted that mask requirements in individual health-care clinics may vary and encouraged Manitobans to continue doing all they can to minimize risk of illness, both for themselves and for others. This includes regularly washing hands, sneezing or coughing into one's elbow instead of hands, keeping up to date on vaccinations and staying home when sick.