

COVID-19: Important Information for Cardiac Patients January 26, 2021

It is very important that you do not neglect symptoms of heart disease during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you experience worsening chest pain, if you feel shortness of breath, palpitations, or if you experience fainting, call 911 or your local emergency number.

What do I need to know?

If you have heart disease, you are at a higher risk of getting severe complications from an infection. Chronic heart disease, including conditions such as high blood pressure and heart failure can lead to a weaker immune system. The information in this handout can help you manage the risk of COVID-19 infection.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Cough
- Headache
- Fever/chills
- Muscle or joint aches
- Sore throat/hoarse voice
- Shortness of breath/breathing difficulties
- Loss of taste or smell
- Vomiting, or diarrhea (loose bowel or watery stool) for more than 24 hours
- Runny Nose
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Nausea or loss of appetite
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Skin rash of unknown cause

Those at higher risk typically develop more serious, even fatal, symptoms such as pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome and kidney failure.

I don't have any flu-like symptoms. Can I still come to appointments at my clinic / cardiac testing?

All cardiac patients without flu-like symptoms should come to appointments unless your clinic contacts you to make a change or to arrange a virtual (telephone or digital videoconference) visit. The hospitals, clinics, and units are putting many measures in place to ensure all cardiac patients are provided the safest care. This especially applies to cardiac patients with heart transplants, post cardiac surgery, congenital conditions, and implanted medical devices, such as ventricular assist device (VAD), pacemaker, and implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) all of whom need to continue to come in for scheduled appointments unless you are told otherwise. Patients who skip or miss essential tests/treatments/follow-up visits may have adverse health outcomes and require emergency medical services such as urgent care or emergency room care. For clinic visits by phone, or by digital platforms like Zoom or Skype, make sure you are available at your scheduled appointment time, but please allow for some flexibility in timing, in case the call to you is delayed.



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If I have flu-like symptoms or have travelled out of province in the last 14 days, what should I do?

1. Call Health Links-Info Santé 1-888-315-9257 or 204-788-8200. If you need urgent medical care, call 911 or your local emergency number. Make sure they know you are a cardiac patient.
2. Call your clinic before you leave home for the clinic visit.
3. Do not come to clinic until you have talked to your clinic staff. We will plan for your visit in a way that keeps you and others from being exposed to COVID-19.

If you or someone you live with or have close contact with has been tested for COVID-19 at another location, please phone and alert the clinic BEFORE coming in.

What is Cardiac Sciences doing to lower the risk of infection?

- All staff self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to attending work.
- All staff are wearing medical masks.
- Hourly cleaning of all high touch points (chairs, counter tops, railings etc.).
- Disinfecting patient rooms / equipment between patients.
- All patients are screened for COVID-19 symptoms and risk factors prior to attending clinic.
- In person clinic appointments are restricted to only sicker patients and all others occur virtually.
- Bringing patients directly into exam room / diagnostic suite to reduce contact in waiting areas.
- Reduced and marked seating in waiting areas to maintain 2 meters / 6 feet distance between patients.
- Restricting visitors to only those that meet specific criteria (cognitive impairment, physical assistance or translation).

How can I lower my risk of getting an infection?

We want to keep you and your family safe. We also need to ensure that you have access to a safe place for your cardiac care.

- Enter alone - No visitors are permitted in our outpatient care areas (there are specific exceptions that can be discussed with clinic/test staff prior to your appointment).
- Wear a non-medical cloth mask when entering and for your duration in the site.
- Wash / sanitize your hands when entering the site and clinic / test area.
- Arrive no more than 10 minutes before your appointment.
- Maintain 2 meters / 6 feet distance from others.

Call Health Links-Info Santé 1-888-315-9257 or 204-788-8200 OR your cardiac clinic if you are **unwell** so that we can keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible. Tell your clinic staff if you have travelled to a region that requires you to isolate for 14 days upon your return or have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 or is awaiting test results.

Below are steps that you and your family can do to help lower the risk of COVID-19 infection:

- **Limit travel. The risk of exposure to COVID-19 may be higher in other areas of Canada. Do not travel to areas that require you to isolate for 14 days upon returning.**
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. Dry your hands completely. If you do not have soap, you can use alcohol hand sanitizer if your hands are not visibly dirty.
- Wash your hands:
 - Before, during and after making meals
 - Before eating
 - After using the toilet
 - When your hands are dirty
- Stay six feet (two meters) away from others when possible.
- Wear a non-medical cloth mask when you leave your home.
- Avoid groups of people.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing. Use a tissue or your sleeve. Throw tissues you have used in the garbage and wash your hands right away.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Do not shake hands or give hugs.
- Clean (disinfect) surfaces such as phones, computer, tables, chairs, countertops, doorknobs.
- Do not share items such as drinking glasses, spoons/forks or toothbrushes.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Reduce the number of people you have contact with.

For more information on COVID-19 visit <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/>.