

Message from Dr. Karen Gripp, medical director, HSC Winnipeg Children's Hospital Emergency Department:

HSC Winnipeg Children's Hospital Emergency Department is seeing a significant increase in patient visits as respiratory viruses continue to circulate in the community.

While many of our patients are very sick, we are also seeing many kids who could be treated in a more appropriate setting or safely managed at home. At least a third of the patients seen each day over the past week could have been safely cared for by their family doctor, a nurse practitioner, or at home with rest and fluids.

We know that having a sick child can be very stressful and that when you need emergency help, you know where to go. But just as importantly, we want you to avoid waiting in an emergency department for long periods with a sick child if they can be cared for elsewhere.

We expect that patient volumes will continue to remain high in the weeks ahead and almost certainly increase. This will further stretch our ability to take care of sick children, so it's imperative that parents and caregivers understand their options for care and when symptoms warrant a visit to the emergency department.

We know having a sick or injured child can be scary and overwhelming, so knowing where to go **before** your child becomes sick or injured can help you make the right decision when they need care.

It's important to remember that not all respiratory symptoms require a visit to the emergency department. Many common cold and flu symptoms, including fevers, can be safely treated at home or with a visit to your doctor, a walk-in clinic, or urgent care centre.

I want to reassure parents and caregivers that if you come to the emergency department, you will get the care that you need. But if your child's needs are not urgent, you can expect a longer wait as we continue to see the sickest patients first.

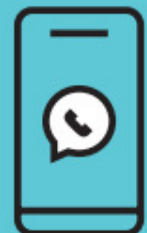
I encourage you to review the attached pamphlet and visit KidCareMB.ca, which includes helpful information on care options as well as symptoms to watch out for when caring for a sick child.

Not Sure Where to Go?

Talk to a nurse from home and get help assessing your child's symptoms.

Call Health Links – Info Santé at **204-788-8200** or **1-888-315-9257**

In an emergency, call **9-1-1**.



How to Care for Your Child During Respiratory Virus Season

Having a sick child can be scary. Know what symptoms to watch for, *how* to provide care and comfort at home, and *when* to seek help — it's all part of providing good **KidCare!**

At an emergency department, the sickest patients are always seen first. Less sick patients will have to wait for care. Depending on your child's symptoms, you may be able to provide care at **home**, or be seen faster by your doctor or a **walk-in clinic** or **urgent care centre**.

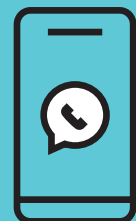
When deciding where to go, consider these **cold and flu symptoms** to determine whether your child needs emergency care.

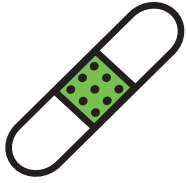
	Emergency	Not an Emergency
Breathing Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in respiratory distress • pale skin with blue lips • wheezing, not responding to medication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nasal congestion and cough • mild wheezing that is responding to medication or is not associated with difficulty breathing
Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infant (less than 3 months old) with fever • immune system or chronic health problems • difficult to wake or excessively sleepy • fever ongoing for more than 5-7 days • neck stiffness with vomiting and sleepiness • unable to walk or weakness of arms or legs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in healthy and vaccinated babies • in children who are generally well • on its own, a high fever does not require a trip to emergency
Vomiting or Diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a child less than 3 months old • repeated vomiting and shows signs of dehydration (no tears, dry mouth, sunken soft spot) • containing blood or is bright green • dehydration with dry mouth, or if no urine is passed for 12+ hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vomiting or diarrhea less than 3-4 times per day • ongoing diarrhea after 'stomach flu' as this can last for up to 2 weeks

Learn more about symptoms that should lead to a visit to emergency and those that can be cared for at home or elsewhere, at KidCareMB.ca.

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Vaccination

All children in Manitoba aged six months and older can get COVID and flu vaccines.

Keeping your kids up to date on vaccinations can prevent them from getting sick. There are many locations across the province where they can be immunized, and we have an online map to help you find a spot that is convenient.

Book Now — [ProtectMB.ca](https://www.protectmb.ca)



Fevers?

Fever is not dangerous. It is the body's natural response to infections and actually helps to fight infection.

Higher temperatures do not mean the infection is more serious, and a fever on its own does not require medical attention in most children.*

You do not need to treat fever with medicine. Cool your child by dressing them in light clothing, offering extra fluids, and keeping the room cool.

**Children under 3 months of age and those with chronic health conditions should be seen if a fever develops.*

A Dose of Prevention Goes a Long Way!



Stay Home

Keep sick kids at home to slow the spread.



Hand washing

Teach your kids to wash hands with soap for 20+ seconds.



Cough

Cover your cough or sneeze.



Masks

Consider wearing a mask when indoors in crowded locations.

Need Advice?

Health Links – Info Santé can help 24/7.

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