

## Patient updates

**Oct. 29, 2021**

Dear patients,

We are writing to share a brief message about our phone lines, as you may be experiencing longer than normal wait times when you call in. In this communication, we will information share about:

- The different clerical roles in the Family Health Team
- What happens when you call our clinics
- Anticipated wait times you may experience
- Email booking if your request is not urgent

### **The different clerical roles in the Family Health Team**

Our clerical team plays a very important role. They do a variety of work to help ensure patients get the care they need. These roles include, but are not limited to:

- Greeting you at the front desk, checking you in for an appointment or answering questions
- Answering the phones to book appointments or directing your calls
- Sending referral requests or following up with specialist offices
- Connecting with patients about appointments or booking a test or follow up
- Ensuring the clinics are running smoothly on a day to day basis

Our clerical team across all five sites includes nine staff members dedicated to the phone lines. This team of individuals continues to work hard through the challenges of the pandemic to make sure we are able to meet your health care needs.

### **What happens when you call our clinics?**

You have likely noticed that you do not always speak to the same person when you call the clinic. This is because our clerical team members rotate to cover the

different clerical roles. All our clerical team members are located on site at one of our five clinics. The team member you speak with may not be at your home clinic. However, each team member understands the booking processes at all the clinics and knows how to support and direct your call.

### **Anticipated wait time you may experience**

You may experience longer than normal wait times when you call in. On average, this wait time is 5-10 minutes, but can be longer with higher volumes of calls. We are currently experiencing staffing shortages, a trend impacting all health care systems. We appreciate your understanding and patience when you call us. Our team is working very hard to get through all the calls and support our patients.

If your health care issue is **not urgent** and does not require same day attention, consider sending your booking request through email. You can do this by following the steps outlined in the next section. These requests will be addressed within 2 business days, on average.

If you would prefer to call and your concern is not urgent, consider calling mid-morning or mid-afternoon, when the phone lines tend to be less busy. Monday mornings are a particularly busy time and be prepared to experience increased wait times when you call in.

Please avoid calling and emailing multiple times. If it is an emergency, proceed to your nearest emergency room. Non-urgent visits may take longer to book. Please be patient, we need to prioritize urgent care requests.

### **Use email booking if you have email consent on file**

If you have email consent on file, you can email us to request an appointment. Please use the email: [FHTBookings@smh.ca](mailto:FHTBookings@smh.ca)

Include the following information in the email:

- Name:
- Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY):
- Telephone Number:
- Doctor or Nurse Practitioners Name:
- Reason for visit:



Caring hearts. Leading minds.

We are here for you and want you to reach out when you need us. We also want to be transparent about our wait times to help you have positive experiences when reaching out for care. Our team is working hard to recruit more staff to help serve and support our patients and team. We appreciate your understanding as we do this.

Take care and be well,

*SMHAFHT Leadership Team*