

Patient updates

Jan. 20, 2022,

Dear patients,

We know this continues to be a confusing and challenging time for many. We are writing to share some updates about our clinics and share some ongoing resources to help you navigate the current wave. In this communication, we will share about:

- Continued virtual care and in-person appointment options
- Updates to our phone lines including opening and closing times
- Closure of our press 8 line for Vaccine booking support
- What to do if you have COVID-19 symptoms

Continued virtual care and in-person appointment options

We continue to ask patients to call first before coming into clinic when possible. As we are still in the 5th wave of this pandemic, we are looking to continue virtual care as much as possible. This helps limit the number of people in clinic and transportation for patients to and from our clinics. As of Monday Jan. 24, when you call to book an appointment our staff will ask if you are comfortable booking a virtual appointment. If so, our team will book you a phone appointment. To review more about virtual appointments, including what can be assessed virtually, read our previous [patient communication](#) from Dec. 23, 2021. If you would prefer to be seen in person, or have a health concern that required being seen in clinic, you can request to book an in-person appointment. At this time, we continue to hold non-urgent visits such as physicals unless specified by your family doctor. If we need to change or cancel any existing appointments, we will call to inform you. If you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment, please give us a call.

A reminder that prescriptions can be renewed through your pharmacy. Please connect with your pharmacist and they will send a prescription renewal notice to us. If you take medication daily, ensure you have enough medication should you need to self-isolate and are asked to not leave your home.

Requests for forms to be completed may take us longer than usual. Please allow up to 30 days for these to be completed.

Updates to our phone lines

At this time, you may notice longer wait times on the phones. Wait times can range from 5- 20 minutes, depending on when you call. Our busy times of the day are around 9 a.m. and after lunch at 1 p.m. If you are able to plan your call for alternative times, this may reduce your wait times. We appreciate your patience when calling us. Our team is working to make sure all our services remain open.

Clinic staffing schedules have made it necessary to close the clinic phone lines at 4:30 p.m. This began earlier this month on Jan. 10. **This means our phone lines are now open from 9 a.m. to noon, then reopen from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Our urgent care clinics will remain open in the evenings Monday- Thursday 5-8 p.m. with phones closing at 7:30 p.m. If you have an urgent medical concern that needs to be addressed that day, we ask you call back after 5 p.m. If your medical concern is life threatening, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department.

Our Urgent Care clinics on Saturday and Sunday will remain open. We continue to ask you call first. You will then be asked if you would like to come into clinic or can receive a phone call back.

Outside of our evening and weekend urgent care clinic hours, patients can access after-hours care from the doctor on call for urgent health issues that cannot safely wait until the next clinic day.

Please see our website for our [urgent care clinics](#) and hours.

Closure of our press 8 line for Vaccine Booking Support

To help support our other clinic roles, we are closing our Press 8 Vaccine support line. We know many people appreciated and benefited from this line. If you still need to book your vaccine, 1st, 2nd, 3rd or NEW 4th dose for those who are severely immunocompromised., use the following options:

- **St. Michael's Hospital vaccine clinic- adults (18+) only. Clinic closing Jan. 28**
<https://uht-public.vertoengage.com/>
- **Provincial Portal- adults and children**
<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/getting-covid-19-vaccine>
- **Phone number- if no access to computer or have a red and white health card- adults and children**
1-833-943-3900
- **Text Support -adults and children**
Text "VACCINE" to 1-833-750-0888
- **St. James Town Clinic- adults and children**
<https://www.stjamestown.org/vaccine-booking/>

4th doses are being recommended and offered to patients who are severely immunocompromised. The 4th dose for this group is considered their booster dose, as these patients need 3 doses to have a complete vaccine series.

Please refer to some of our [previous communications](#) about vaccine specific information. We continue to urge everyone eligible, including children over 5 years old to get vaccinated as soon as possible! This continues to be your best defense to protect yourselves and family from severe illness or hospitalization. If you have recently recovered from a COVID infection, you can get vaccinated as soon as you don't have symptoms and are out of your self-isolation period.

At this time, we are not providing COVID-19 vaccines in our clinics. This will allow us to focus on providing primary care to our patients, as well as managing patients at home who have COVID. There are many options available to get your vaccine and we are here to answer your questions and support your decision-making.

What to do if you have COVID symptoms

Please continue to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and take action if you develop symptoms. You can complete this online [self-assessment](#) if you have

COVID symptoms, been exposed to someone who has COVID to help determine what you should do.

You can also follow this online tool: [What to do if you've been exposed to COVID-19](#) to help determine how long you and your family members may need to self-isolate.

For information about when to call our clinic with COVID-19 symptoms, view our previous [patient communication from Dec. 31, 2021](#)

A great resource you can use to get up to date and accurate information is the website: [Confused about COVID?](#) This online tool was created by the Family and Community Medicine Team at the University of Toronto.

We know these are tough times. We continue to remain open and be here to support your health care needs. If you need support or care, please reach out to book an appointment.

Take care and be well,
SMHAFHT Leadership Team