

Patient updates

Dear patients,

We are writing to update our guidance for booking virtual or in-person health-care appointments. Patients of our Family Health Team are able to choose whether to book in-person or virtual appointments with their doctor or nurse practitioner. We also want to share information about an upcoming event.

In this communication, we will share information about:

- What types of concerns should be assessed in person?
- What types of concerns can be safely addressed virtually?
- When should you visit an emergency room
- Family OB Night – open to all interested in learning more

What types of health concerns should be assessed in-person rather than virtually?

While virtual appointments can be more accessible for you and many concerns or questions can still be managed safely virtually, many other health concerns can only be addressed safely in person. These include things that your doctor or nurse practitioner would need to see or touch in order to make a diagnosis or provide treatment, including:

- Stomach pain
- New chest pain (if not an emergency)
- New or worsening shortness of breath (if not an emergency)
- Breast issue
- Genital or Anorectal Issues
- Eye issues - e.g., pink eye, styes (go to nearest emergency department if having sudden vision changes)
- Ear issues
- New headaches (if not an emergency)
- Immunization administration
- Prenatal and well-baby visits
- Pap tests

In addition to this list of health concerns, if you have chronic health conditions (i.e. diabetes, high blood pressure) and have not been seen in person for more than 6 months, you should strongly consider booking an in-person appointment.

You can be seen for in person appointments in our clinics regardless of COVID vaccination status. We continue to have protocols in place to ensure the [safety of your clinic visit](#).

At this time, if you are feeling well, do not have any chronic health conditions and are not due for any [cancer screening](#), please consider holding off on booking adult “check-ups” or “physicals” as we catch up on delayed care.

What types of health concerns may be effectively assessed through a virtual appointment?

Below are some examples of medical concerns that can be safely assessed initially with a virtual visit. If you're not sure whether you need to see your provider in-person, we would recommend you schedule the visit in-person:

- Allergy symptoms - Nose/Eyes
- Blood test requests for known chronic diseases that are stable and for which you have had an in-person visit within the past 6 months (e.g., heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity)
- Contraception renewal as long as you have had a blood pressure checked in the last 6 months
- Cold or flu symptoms you are concerned about
- Fatigue
- Form/Document completion requests
- Lice
- Mental health issues (e.g., mood changes, anxiety)
- Prescription renewals (in most circumstances; please note that renewals for controlled substances such as stimulants, opioids, and benzodiazepines may require an in-person appointment)
- Rash or skin concerns (option available to send photos in advance of visit for provider review; please do not send photos of genitalia or other sensitive areas)
- Referral requests for physiotherapy, massage, chiropractic, or other allied health discipline

- Some sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing
- Smoking cessation or substance use questions (e.g., alcohol, cannabis, other drugs)
- Test result review
- Urinary symptoms
- Vaccine questions or forms

If after the virtual visit your provider has any additional questions or needs to see you in person, they will ask you to book an in-person visit after your conversation.

When should you visit the emergency room?

There are also situations in which your symptoms may be potentially dangerous or life-threatening. If you are experiencing the symptoms noted below, please dial 911 (or ask a family member/friend to dial 911).

- Severe chest pain
- Severe shortness of breath
- Sudden severe headache
- Continuous vomiting and inability to drink any fluids
- Serious trauma or injuries (i.e., bleeding that won't stop, deep cuts, broken bones)
- Sudden loss of vision
- Sudden onset weakness of the face or arm/leg
- Sudden inability to walk or talk

We are working hard to make improvements to the way we provide care. You may have noticed longer wait times on our phone lines while we make these changes. At this time, our email booking services are still on hold.

Upcoming event at the Family Health Team: Meet the OB Night (Virtual)

We would like to invite you to our virtual 'Meet the OB (obstetrician) Night on **Monday June 13, 2022 at 5:15 p.m.** on Zoom. If you are pregnant, thinking of becoming pregnant, or just want to learn more about this program, you are welcome to join! This will give you a chance to meet the Family OB providers who will provide care to you or your birthing partner when you arrive on the Labour & Delivery floor.

To join the Zoom meeting, please see the invite details below: **Visit zoom.us and click on "Join "and enter the following details:**

Meeting ID: 638 0236 6255

Passcode: 767120

One tap mobile

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Take care and be well.

SMHAFHT Leadership Team