

## Patient updates

**August 27, 2021**

Dear patients,

Based on evolving data around the Delta variant, and on the recent experiences of [other regions](#), Ontario paused exit from the 3-phase [Roadmap to Reopen](#). The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts are continuing to monitor data to know when it is safe to lift public health and workplace safety measures currently in place. Key strategies to [prevent the spread of COVID-19](#) remain the same, wearing masks, physical distancing, washing hands, and getting vaccinated.

Ontario is [taking action](#) to increase protection from the Delta variant. This includes making COVID-19 vaccination policies mandatory in high-risk settings, including healthcare and long-term care, and providing third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to vulnerable populations. We wanted to share a summary of some key developments, announcements and messages conveyed since we last wrote to you. In this message, we are sharing information about:

- Booster COVID vaccinations for high-risk groups
- How we are keeping our clinics safe
- Update to screening questions
- Tips for great virtual appointments
- Upcoming workshop at the FHT

### **Booster “third-dose” COVID vaccinations for high-risk groups**

Based on the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts, third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are now available to those at highest-risk, providing an extra layer of protection against the Delta variant. Eligible individuals include:

- Transplant recipients (including solid organ transplant and hematopoietic stem cell transplants)
- Individuals receiving treatment with an anti-CD20 agent (e.g. rituximab,

ocrelizumab, ofatumumab), commonly used for conditions such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, leukemias/lymphoma, etc.

- Individuals receiving active treatment (chemotherapy, targeted therapies, immunotherapy) for malignant hematologic disorders (e.g. acute myeloid leukemia, chronic myeloid leukemia, acute lymphoblastic leukemia, chronic lymphocytic leukemia)

If you are eligible for a third dose based on these criteria please contact your specialist office to obtain required documentation

If you do not have a specialist or they cannot be reached, please book an appointment with your family doctor to obtain a letter.

If you need any assistance with booking an appointment at a vaccination clinic, including for first or second doses please call your clinic phone number and push 8. We can help!

## **How we are keeping our clinics safe**

Across Unity Health Toronto, the priority is to create the safest spaces possible for our patients, staff, and communities. The COVID-19 vaccines are a key tool in helping us end this pandemic. As of September 7:

- All Unity Health Toronto staff will be required to submit COVID-19 vaccination records, if they haven't already
- Those who do not provide proof of full vaccination will be required to take regular COVID19 screening tests

Our Family Health Team continues to be available to see you for your health concerns. In most cases your first visit will continue to be virtual. If needed, you will be seen in-person for further assessment.

Please note that our urgent care clinics also continue to be available Monday to Thursday evening and on weekends. View our [website](#) for more details on urgent care clinic locations and hours (scroll down to "urgent care clinics" on the page). Additionally, after clinic hours you can reach us for urgent concerns by calling your

clinic phone number and following the prompts to speak to the Family Medicine resident on-call.

## **Update to screening questions**

In order to keep our clinics, patients and staff safe, we will continue to ask screening questions when you enter our clinics. These questions will ask about if you currently have COVID-19, any close contact with a COVID-19 case, recent travel, and if you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms. For those who have travelled outside of the country in the last 14 days, we are now asking if you have been directed to quarantine post travel. Please answer these questions truthfully. If you screen positive by answering yes to any of our screening questions, you will be escorted to a private room, where your health care provider will see you.

## **Tips for great virtual appointments**

Many of us are leading complex lives and managing multiple responsibilities during the pandemic. Getting the most out of your virtual appointment can sometimes be a challenge. We wanted to offer the following suggestions on how to get the most out of your virtual visit:

- Plan your meeting space. Consider privacy and confidentiality, and reduce background noise as much as possible.
- Though we make every effort to be on time, please be prepared for the fact that your provider may call any time within an hour of the appointment time.
- Have any assistive devices you may need with you.
- Test your device (phone or computer) before the appointment.
- Ensure that your phone or computer is charged.
- Click [here](#) for more information about navigating a virtual visit.

## **Upcoming workshops at the Family Health Team**

1. Are you 55 years old or older, and interested in learning about how to prepare for retirement? Sign- up today! Sessions are on Tuesdays at 11 a.m. – noon or Wednesdays at 2 – 3 p.m.

**Sessions start on Tuesday September 21 at 11 a.m. – noon**

Call **416.864.3022** to register **BEFORE** Friday September 13, 2021

Please be ready to attend **ALL** 4 sessions

**Session 1:** Managing Financial Stress and Old Age Security

**Session 2:** Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)

**Session 3:** Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

**Session 4:** What programs can I apply for when I am on my pension?

2. Meet the Family Obstetrics Team virtually on Monday September 13, 2021 at 5:15pm, to learn how we provide prenatal care and what to expect when delivering at St. Michael's Hospital. Zoom meeting link:  
<https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/62343908628?pwd=OU9BTEVzRXY0Z2xPdZJVRWpHRUFtUT09>

Thank you for doing your part to help stop the spread of COVID-19. If you haven't yet been vaccinated, please reach out to have a conversation with your provider or member of the team. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your community. In addition to getting vaccinated, we can all continue to [follow these tips](#) to help stop the spread.

Take care and be well,

*SMHAFHT Leadership Team*