

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**.

