



SASKATCHEWAN
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



A CHAPTER OF THE COLLEGE OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS OF CANADA
UNE SECTION DU COLLÈGE DES MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE DU CANADA

NEWS RELEASE

Physicians urge school divisions to mandate masking, practise public health measures

For immediate release: Aug. 18, 2021

The Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) and the Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians (SCFP) urge school divisions to reinstate public health measures – including mandatory masking - as children return to classes next month.

“We are asking school divisions to enact measures that will mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in their schools, especially as the highly contagious Delta variant spreads in the province,” said SMA president Dr. Eben Strydom. “We want students to return to schools and have a rich learning experience, but schools must be safe for that to happen. The safety of our children is our paramount concern.”

Physicians have a number of concerns as school divisions develop reopening plans, he added. COVID-19 case numbers are rising; Saskatchewan has among the highest numbers of active cases and new cases per 100,000 people. Meanwhile, Saskatchewan trails other provinces in vaccinations of people aged 12 and older, while children under 12 are not yet eligible.

“Physicians are especially concerned as we now have a pandemic of the unvaccinated, yet children under 12 cannot receive their shots,” said Dr. Strydom, a Melfort family physician. He noted that in July, 18 per cent of COVID-19 cases in Saskatchewan occurred in children under 12.

Dr. Myles Deutscher, president of SCFP, urged anyone with concerns about vaccines to talk to their primary health-care provider.

“We need to do everything we can to protect our children who cannot yet be vaccinated,” said Dr. Deutscher, a Saskatoon family physician. “COVID-19 is affecting children and with the more dangerous variants and increasing evidence of long-term effects of COVID, it is more important than ever to protect this population.

“The best thing everyone can do is get vaccinated, wear a mask, and practise hand hygiene in schools,” he added.

The SMA and the SCFP urge school division leaders to consider the following:

- Mandate the wearing of masks in all indoor spaces, including in classrooms and common areas. Revisit this mandate only when case numbers improve in their communities.
- Mandate full vaccination of everyone 12 and over, including students and staff, and parents or guardians of school-aged children, as recommended by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.
- Facilitate the establishment of mobile vaccination clinics in schools.
- Require all sick children and adults to stay home and get tested.
- Report positive cases to parents, or anyone who needs to know, as soon as possible, and have close contacts self-isolate.
- Make sanitizing dispensers widely available, and continue to practise hand-washing and sanitization.
- Maintain social distancing when possible, until case numbers subside.
- Clean and test HVAC systems regularly to ensure they are functioning properly.

-30-

Contact:

Girard Hengen, Communications Adviser
Saskatchewan Medical Association
Phone: 306-230-2673
Email (preferred): girard.hengen@sma.sk.ca

Shona den Brok
Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians
Phone: 306-227-2042
Email: sdenbrok@sk-cfp.ca