

# Information for Cancer Patients and Companions on COVID-19

*By CCMB Communications and Public Affairs*

August 26, 2020 10:00 AM

## **Patient and Companion Update Effective June 30, 2022**

June 29, 2022

As guidelines for healthcare facilities in Manitoba continue to evolve, CancerCare Manitoba (CCMB) is making changes to restrictions for companions coming to patient appointments and treatments. The information that we will be forwarding is below.

### **As of Thursday, June 30, 2022:**

One companion will be permitted for the following types of appointments/visits:

- Regular clinic appointments
- Radiation therapy and procedures
- Bloodwork

Unfortunately, due to space limitations, companions will not be permitted in the outpatient treatment (chemotherapy) area.

### **Exceptions**

Patients may be allowed to have one companion for chemotherapy treatments in the following situations:

- If you have cognitive challenges\*
- If you have significant mobility challenges\*
- Pediatric appointments (2 caregivers are allowed)

\*If you have cognitive or significant mobility challenges, or have other questions regarding patient companions, please contact your clinic team.

If you are dropped off for an appointment, CCMB can assist by calling your companion on their cell phone to alert them that the treatment/visit is complete.

Note: We are continuing to strongly encourage social distancing within our waiting rooms and other spaces. With our limited space, we must continue to limit the number of people in CCMB facilities in order to encourage appropriate distancing.

Patients coming to CCMB should be reassured by these measures; our goal is to keep everyone safe, including vulnerable patients and critical staff.

CCMB continues its commitment to providing high-quality care in an environment that is safe for patients and staff. Throughout the pandemic, this has included careful attention to infection control measures such as the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by staff and patients, entry screening for COVID-19 symptoms, hand hygiene, physical distancing and encouraging vaccination.

All staff and patients will continue to be screened for symptoms (staff are not to come to work if they are sick) and everyone – staff and patients – will continue to wear medical-grade masks.

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## Update to Patients and Essential Companions

March 1, 2022

CancerCare Manitoba continues its commitment to provide high-quality care in an environment that is safe for patients and staff. Throughout the pandemic, this has included careful attention to infection control measures such as use of PPE (for staff and patients), entry screening for COVID-19 symptoms, hand hygiene, physical distancing and encouraging vaccination – almost all CCMB staff (>98%) are fully vaccinated.

As of March 1st, all staff and patients will continue to be screened for symptoms (staff are not to come to work if they are sick) and everyone – staff and patients – will continue to wear medical grade PPE. Within CCMB sites, we are maintaining physical distancing measures and we continue to keep the volume of traffic through CCMB at a reduced level to promote physical distancing. Hand hygiene is, as always, a priority in our facilities.

Please note that as of March 1st, essential companions are no longer required to show proof of vaccination on entry to a CCMB facility; however, we continue to admit only essential companions to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.

Patients coming to CCMB should be reassured by retention of these measures which continue to be in place – our goal is to keep everyone safe, vulnerable patients and critical staff.

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## Update to Patients Regarding Essential Companions

February 18, 2022

**As public health orders are beginning to loosen in our province, CancerCare Manitoba is continuing its current restrictions regarding companions coming with patients to appointments and treatments, even if they are fully vaccinated.**

In special pre-approved circumstances, one essential companion is permitted which includes: a new patient appointment, a patient who requires assistance related to mobility challenges or who requires other forms of personal assistance. Essential companions must continue to show proof of vaccination and picture ID on entry to a CCMB facility.

Patients visiting CancerCare Manitoba sites for appointments or treatments may be vulnerable because of their cancer or its treatments, both of which can lessen the immune system response. Our current procedure to limit the number of people in CCMB sites remains in place to keep patients safe when they need to be here. As well, we are continuing to maintain social distancing requirements within our waiting rooms and other spaces. With our limited space, we must limit the number of people in the facilities in order to ensure appropriate distancing.

We know it is not easy to attend a cancer appointment or treatment alone. We receive a high volume of requests to allow companions to attend with a patient; however, at this time these safety measures remain in place – to protect patients, families and staff.

CancerCare Manitoba is actively involved in the pandemic provincial planning with regard to changes within health facilities related to patients, their families, and staff. We will continue to keep you updated on any changes when these are ready to be implemented.

We thank you for your continued patience, understanding and cooperation.

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## CCMB Patient Companions: New Vaccination Status

December 7, 2021

CancerCare Manitoba is continuing its restrictions regarding companions accompanying patients to CCMB sites. In special pre-approved circumstances, one companion is permitted which includes: a new patient appointment, a patient who experiences mobility challenges or other forms of personal assistance that may be required.

**Starting Monday, December 13, 2021, all companions must show proof of vaccination (their Manitoba vaccination card) and picture ID every time they enter a CCMB facility.** This is consistent with policies at other healthcare facilities across Manitoba.

This new vaccination requirement augments current public health measures in place at our facilities. Patients visiting CancerCare Manitoba sites for appointments or treatments may be vulnerable because of their cancer or its treatments that can lessen the immune system response. Our current procedure to limit the number of people in CCMB sites remains in place to keep patients safe when they need to be here. As well, we need to continue to maintain social distancing requirements within our waiting rooms and other spaces.

We know it is not easy to attend a cancer appointment or treatment alone. We receive a high volume of requests to allow companions to attend with a patient; however, unfortunately at this time we cannot accommodate the volume of people we have in the past, before COVID-19, due to ongoing social distancing requirements. These measures are in place to protect patients, families and staff.

CancerCare Manitoba is actively involved in the pandemic provincial table with regard to changes in operations within health facilities related to patients, their families, and staff. We will continue to keep you updated on any changes when these are ready to be implemented.

Thank you for your patience, understanding and cooperation.

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## Eligibility for Third Dose COVID-19 Vaccines for Cancer Patients

September 20, 2021

Manitoba Health and Seniors Care announced on September 15, 2021, that it would be approving a **third dose** of COVID-19 vaccine to certain groups of individuals, including those whose immune system is moderately to severely compromised due to a medical condition or treatment of a medical condition such as cancer.

For cancer patients, the definition of those who are moderately to severely immunocompromised includes the following:

1. Patients receiving active chemotherapy (including immunotherapy) for solid tumor or hematologic malignancies
2. Patients who have undergone CAR-T therapy or a hematopoietic stem cell transplant, including those within 2 years of the procedure or taking immunosuppressive therapy
3. Patients on anti-B cell therapies (monoclonal antibodies targeting CD19, CD20 or CD22), high dose corticosteroids (dose equivalent to  $\geq 20$  mg prednisone daily for 4 or more weeks), and any active treatment with immunosuppressive medication such as cancer chemotherapeutic agents (chemotherapy, immunotherapy including checkpoint inhibitors, or targeted therapies), and those receiving tumor-necrosis factor blockers, mycophenolate, tacrolimus, Jak inhibitors, fingolimod and leflunomide

Patients who were on active anti-cancer drug treatment when they received one or both doses of vaccine meet the above criteria and can be approved for a third dose.

Patients who are currently on active anti-cancer drug treatment should follow the advice of their CCMB clinic team regarding the timing of the third dose in relation to treatment.

Patients eligible for a third dose do not need a prescription; however they should contact their CCMB clinic team to request a letter verifying their eligibility for the third dose.

The third vaccine doses will be provided through select pharmacies and Family Physician offices. At this time the third doses are not being provided by the supersites or at CCMB. It is our understanding that both Pfizer and Moderna products are available through the pharmacies and family physician offices although not all family physician offices or pharmacies will stock both products. This link provides locations of pharmacies providing the vaccine Province of Manitoba | Vaccine Finder ([gov.mb.ca \(https://gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/finder.html\)](https://gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/finder.html))

Anyone born before December 31, 2009 is eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine. Anyone 18 years or older is eligible to receive either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. A third doses of the vaccine should be received no sooner than 28 days after the second dose. Note that individuals who previously received two doses of the Astra Zeneca product will receive an mRNA vaccine as a third dose (Pfizer or Moderna).

For cancer patients who have never entered the cancer system, and for those cancer patients who have been discharged from CCMB, including from FPO follow up, guidance can be provided by the Cancer Navigation Services in each region at the following **toll free** numbers:

Winnipeg 1-855-837-5400

Interlake Eastern 1-855-557-2273

Northern 1-855-740-9322

Prairie Mountain 1-855-346-3710

Southern 1-855-623-1533

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## **Update to Patients Regarding Companions**

July 8, 2021

As pandemic restrictions begin to slowly loosen in our province, visits to personal care homes and to patients in hospital are being allowed within certain parameters. At this point in time, CancerCare Manitoba has not received direction to alter how we are operating in the current COVID environment.

Therefore, restrictions remain in place regarding companions accompanying patients to CCMB even if companions are fully vaccinated. In special pre-approved circumstances, one companion is permitted which includes: a new patient appointment, a patient who experiences mobility challenges or other forms of personal assistance that may be required.

Patients visiting CancerCare Manitoba sites for appointments or treatments may be vulnerable because of their cancer or its treatments that can lessen the immune system response. Our current procedure to limit the number of people in CCMB sites remains in place to keep patients safe when they need to be here. As well, we need to continue to maintain social distancing requirements within our waiting rooms and other spaces.

We know it is not easy to attend a cancer appointment or treatment alone. We receive a high volume of requests to allow companions to attend with a patient; however, unfortunately at this time we cannot accommodate the volume of people we have in the past, before COVID-19, due to ongoing social distancing requirements. These measures are in place to protect patients, families and staff.

CancerCare Manitoba is actively involved in the pandemic provincial table with regard to changes in operations within health facilities related to patients, their families, and staff. We will keep you updated on any changes when these are ready to be implemented.

Thank you for your patience, understanding and cooperation.

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## **COVID-19 Vaccination and Eligibility for Second Dose for Cancer Patients, Update: May 21, 2021**

May 21, 2021

As of May 21, 2021, many cancer patients who are on anti-cancer drug treatment are eligible for priority scheduling of their SECOND dose of COVID-19 vaccination.

Please see the new eligibility guide and booking information here for scheduling SECOND doses.

Eligible individuals can book their appointments online at <https://protectmb.ca/> (<https://protectmb.ca/>), or by calling (toll-free) 1-844-626-8222 (1-844-MAN-VACC).

If you have questions about your eligibility, or you want direction on the specific timing of your SECOND dose, relative to your treatment schedule, please contact your clinic team.

If you will be starting anti-cancer drug treatment in the near future, you may also want to talk to your clinic team about timing your first dose of vaccine (if you haven't received it already), and about your eligibility of scheduling your second dose within 28 days.

If you are a patient with cancer or care provider with further questions related to vaccination timing and treatment, please contact:

- Your CancerCare team members (nurse, clerk or physician) at the phone number they have provided to you
  - The CCMB COVID Hotline at 1-855-837-5400 (Hours: Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Weekends 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) to speak to a Nurse Navigator
  - The Cancer Helpline at 204-787-8900 (Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
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### ***A Note for Patients & Families Regarding Gifts of Food for Staff***

April 19, 2021

#### **Eligibility for AstraZeneca/Covishield Vaccine Expanded**

Please be advised that Manitoba has revised the vaccine eligibility criteria:

All Manitobans aged 40 and over will be eligible to receive the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine at a medical clinic or pharmacy. Eligible Manitobans can find their nearest clinic or pharmacy with available doses by visiting [www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/finder.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/finder.html) (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/finder.html>).

Updates to vaccine eligibility can always be found at: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/eligibility-criteria.html> (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/eligibility-criteria.html>)

For more information, see [Manitoba Expanding Eligibility Criteria for Astrazeneca/Covishield Vaccine, Continues to Protect Manitobans by Expanding Vaccination Capacity](https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=51137) (<https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=51137>)

**[Click here for FAQ about Covid Vaccine for cancer patients \(https://www.cancercare.mb.ca/About-Us/communications-and-public-affairs/news-archive/Patient-Information-Frequently-Asked-Questions-about-the-COVID-19-Vaccine\)](https://www.cancercare.mb.ca/About-Us/communications-and-public-affairs/news-archive/Patient-Information-Frequently-Asked-Questions-about-the-COVID-19-Vaccine)**

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Jan. 8, 2021

At this time, the COVID-19 vaccine is not being offered to the general public, including cancer patients. We know the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for the general public; however, there may be special considerations for cancer patients, especially those who have a weakened immune system or those who are on active anticancer treatment.

CancerCare Manitoba is actively working with Manitoba's Vaccine Implementation Task Force to review evidence from around the world on using the COVID-19 vaccine for cancer patients. More information is needed to decide the best time to provide this vaccine to cancer patients depending on where you are in your cancer journey.

CancerCare Manitoba will provide updates as information becomes available. Please continue to check our website.

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***A Note for Patients & Families Regarding Gifts of Food for Staff***

Dec. 9, 2020

Patients and families often wish to show appreciation to staff with gifts of food. During this time, due to COVID-19, we regret to inform you that we cannot accept any gifts of food. Your words of gratitude to our staff, as you feel appropriate, are always more than enough. Thank you.

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***Important Changes Regarding Patient Companions***

Dec. 1, 2020

With widespread community transmission of COVID-19 in Manitoba, CancerCare Manitoba (CCMB) will temporarily increase restrictions on patient companions in CCMB facilities. Read more here (<https://www.cancercare.mb.ca/About-Us/communications-and-public-affairs/news-archive/Important-Changes-Regarding-Patient-Companions-00001>).

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### ***Mask use Mandated at Manitoba Hospitals and Health Centres***

***All visitors arriving at health care facilities are required to wear a non-medical mask. This includes CancerCare Manitoba sites. Please see the [Government of Manitoba news release \(https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=49106\)](https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=49106) for more information.***

These guidelines apply to all patients, designated support persons, general visitors and tradespeople. Exceptions: children under the age of two and those determined on a case-by-case basis to be exempt for medical reasons.

If you forget your mask, or are in need of a mask, a cloth mask will be provided at the screening station when you check-in. These cloth masks are courtesy of CancerCare Manitoba Foundation (<https://www.cancercarefdn.mb.ca/>).

CCMB staff working in clinical areas with patients are following previous Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) recommendations, which includes wearing medical masks for all patient encounters. CCMB has requested that staff also wear non-medical masks in non-clinical areas.

If you have any questions about wearing a mask at CCMB, please ask our entrance screening staff or a member of your health care team.

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### ***Diagnostic Imaging***

Cancer patients are and continue to be a priority for Diagnostic Imaging services during this pandemic period. Therefore, no cancellations of appointments have been made by Diagnostic Services. However, some patients have chosen to cancel their appointment for a Diagnostic test (for example, X-ray or scan) on their own. These cancellations are being communicated by Diagnostics to the referring physicians.

**If you have cancelled an appointment for a Diagnostic test during the pandemic period, be sure to connect with your care team at CancerCare Manitoba or your primary care physician to ensure the appointment is rescheduled in order for your care to continue in a timely manner.**

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### ***Physical Distancing During COVID-19***

CancerCare Manitoba (CCMB) continues to provide care to patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Where possible and appropriate, clinic visits are being carried out over the phone or through Telehealth to reduce the need for patients to come to a CCMB site and to stay at home. Sometimes it is necessary to attend an appointment at a CCMB site to receive treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy.

We want you to know that we are very mindful of the physical distancing recommendations currently in place—to maintain a distance of two metres between persons. As much as possible while providing patient care, we are practicing physical distancing every day whether between staff persons or between staff and patients. If you are receiving a treatment, close contact with staff will be inevitable. However, this contact will be within the recommended time of less than 10 minutes, appropriate protective measures are being taken, and you will not be put at risk.

CCMB is here for you and we are doing everything possible to make your visit to a CCMB site as safe as possible, for you, your family and our staff.

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### ***Mental Health Virtual Therapy Program - Now Available***

Caring for your mental health is important during the COVID-19 pandemic. [AbilitiCBT](https://manitoba.ca/covid19/bewell/virtualtherapy.html) (https://manitoba.ca/covid19/bewell/virtualtherapy.html) is a new digital therapy program from [Morneau Shepell](https://www.morneaushepell.com/ca-en) (https://www.morneaushepell.com/ca-en), available to all Manitobans experiencing mild to moderate symptoms of anxiety due to the pandemic. [Learn more](https://manitoba.ca/covid19/bewell/virtualtherapy.html) (https://manitoba.ca/covid19/bewell/virtualtherapy.html).

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### ***Changes Regarding Counselling and Patient and Family Support Services***

In response to the COVID-19 situation in Manitoba, CancerCare Manitoba has made changes to some of our counselling and patient and family support services.

Please know that this is only temporary. Right now we are taking extra steps to protect cancer patients, their families and staff.

Cancer patients or their families who are in need of counselling support can still receive services. Call 204-787-2109 or toll-free at 1-866-561-1026.

Telephone appointments are being offered instead of in-person appointments.

Any clients whose appointments have been changed will be contacted directly.

Some of our information and support services are on hold at this time.

**For any urgent situations**, cancer patients and their families are asked to call Patient and Family Support Services. Phone 204-787-2109 or toll-free at 1-866- 561-1026.