




Respiratory Illness and COVID19 Protocols – Pre-Clerkship

The health and safety of patients, students, and faculty is our priority as we support students with their education as future physicians. Respiratory illnesses are common, and can pose risks to standardized patients, patients, classmates and staff during learning sessions. As developing health professionals, medical students are leaders and role models and are expected to exercise responsibility for personal health, to support their own well-being and the health of others.

Students are strongly encouraged to have all recommended vaccinations for health care providers, including up-to-date influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations, unless contraindicated

Clinical Patient Interactions:

- If acutely ill with respiratory symptoms, a student should stay home and not attend clinical or educational activities until the acute symptoms have resolved and they have been feeling generally well for 24 h. If returning to any learning activities in clinical settings, follow the [SHA Health Care Workforce Screening & Return to Work Questionnaire](#). Follow the [Clerkship Attendance and Absence Policy](#) to notify of illness.
- Students should do a [point of care risk assessment](#) before every patient interaction, and use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) based on risk of exposure to infection
- Pre-clerkship students may observe or participate in care of patients who have respiratory illnesses including COVID-19 and influenza assuming appropriate clinical supervision and PPE are available
- Fully immunized pre-clerkship students may observe or participate in aerosol-generating medical procedures (AGMPs) only if supervised directly by their preceptor and wearing appropriate PPE (including an N95 mask for which they have been fitted)
- Pre-clerkship students should not engage in clinical learning on a unit with a respiratory outbreak, to limit risk of transmission to patients on other units
- Students who experience symptoms of respiratory illness must follow the SHA Healthcare Workforce Screening and Return to Work Guidance to determine when they can return to clinical learning environments.

Patient Situation	Student Situation	Pre-Clerkship Student Involvement
Patient has respiratory symptoms	All pre-clerkship students, with appropriate PPE	
Patient has respiratory symptoms and having AGMP	Fully vaccinated pre-clerkship students, with appropriate PPE including N95	
Clinical units with COVID-19 confirmed outbreak	All -pre-clerkship students excluded from outbreak units	

This document provides guidance on protocols to follow related to respiratory illnesses for University of Saskatchewan medical students in pre-clerkship. It is informed by Public Health and SHA guidance, including:

- [The Saskatchewan Communicable Disease Manual](#)
- [Saskatchewan Health Authority \(SHA\) Healthcare Workforce Screening & Return to Work Guidance](#)
- [SHA Point of Care Risk Assessment](#)

Pre-Clerkship COVID-19 Protocols – Change History

Date	Change
October 6, 2020	Pre-Clerkship COVID-19 protocols developed and posted to website
December 10, 2020	Staff/Faculty contacts updated
January 13, 2021	Link to SHA document “Risk Classification for Asymptomatic HCWs with Potential Exposure” updated due to update to SHA document
February 8, 2021	Addition of new section related to procedure if a student is scheduled or participating in a learning experience on a clinical unit where there is a COVID-19 outbreak
July 12, 2021	Update for Academic Session 2021-2022
September 27, 2021	Addition of section on exposures outside of learning setting Addition of section on rapid antigen home testing
October 8, 2021	Update to section 6 - Outbreak units; addition of graphic for clinical patient interactions; additional of general safety steps
December 6, 2021	Formatting changes to improve readability, links updated
January 5, 2022	Updates to testing and self-isolation information based on revised public health regulations
January 21, 2022	New guidance on what to do if unable to access a PCR test in a timely way, SHA link updates
Feb 28, 2022	Updates based on changes to provincial, SHA, and University testing and self-isolation/return to work policies, incorporation of RAT as a testing strategy if symptomatic
Mar 2, 2022	Incorporates updated (Mar 1, 2022) SHA Return to Work Guidelines for Health Care Workers
August 2, 2022	Update that student may see patients who screen +; updates to scenarios with revised SHA guidance
September 1, 2022	Update to contingency plan for missed learning
October 20, 2022	Incorporates updated (Oct 13, 2022) SHA Return to Work Guide for Health Care Workers
February 9, 2023	SHA documents, COVID-19 Return to Work Guide for HCW, and Risk Classification for SHA HCW has been amalgamated into Health Care Workforce Screening & Return to Work Questionnaire with new URL.
Nov 28, 2023	Broadened to respiratory illness guidelines; updated links; updated program contacts
Mar 4, 2024	Minor updates to reflect changes in availability of RAT testing
July 14, 2025	Major revision to encompass general guidance on respiratory illness and updated SHA documents.