

## Respiratory Illness and COVID-19 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. COVID-19, specifically, can pose additional risk to those who are vulnerable. 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.



### Clinical Patient Interactions related to COVID-19:

- Pre-clerkship students, during clinical learning experiences, will not see any patients or standardized patients [confirmed positive](#) for COVID-19.
- Pre-clerkship students will not shadow on a clinical unit with a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak, nor will clinical learning experiences typically proceed on a unit with a confirmed outbreak.
- Pre-clerkship students will not participate in aerosol-generating medical procedures (AGMPs) if that procedure requires an N95 mask.
- Fully vaccinated pre-clerkship students may observe or participate in care of patients who screen positive for symptoms of COVID-19 but are not confirmed to have COVID-19, assuming appropriate clinical supervision and PPE at available and clinical supervisor and students are comfortable with this involvement.

\*Fully vaccinated = has completed a Health Canada-approved COVID-19 vaccine primary series. Note that it is strongly recommended that students also receive all boosters for which they are eligible.

Patients can be positive for COVID-19 and be asymptomatic or have mild symptoms. It is important that you use PPE and frequently wash your hands.

Patient Situation	Student situation	Pre-clerkship student involvement
Patient has no symptoms of COVID-19 (screen negative)	All pre-clerkship students	
Patient has symptoms that might be COVID-19 but no positive test results (screen positive)	Fully vaccinated pre-clerkship students	
Clinical units with COVID-19 confirmed outbreak	All -pre-clerkship students	

Patient is confirmed + for COVID-19	All pre-clerkship students	
Procedure requires an N95 mask	All pre-clerkship students	

This document provides guidance on protocols to follow related to respiratory illnesses including COVID-19 for University of Saskatchewan medical students in pre-clerkship. It is informed by University, Public Health and SHA guidance, including:

- [USask COVID-19 Information](#)
- The [Saskatchewan Communicable Disease Manual](#)
- [Saskatchewan Health Authority \(SHA\) Healthcare Workforce Screening & Return to Work Guidance](#).

The following scenarios will help guide you, should you have questions, concerns, or possible exposure to COVID-19:

**Scenario 1 - What do I do if I experience viral-like symptoms (including, but not limited to cough, sore throat, fever)?**

COVID-19 symptoms are similar to any other respiratory virus. If you have [symptoms of COVID-19](#), stay home. If you are already on campus or in a clinical setting and start to feel ill, immediately advise your preceptor, leave the session/clinical setting, and go directly home and self-isolate.

- Stay home and [self-isolate](#), regardless of your vaccination status.
- If feasible, do a home rapid antigen test (RAT)
  - If you have a positive home RAT, then you have COVID-19. Continue to self-isolate. Follow the steps in Scenario 4, below.
  - If you have a negative RAT, it does not guarantee that you do not have COVID-19, as RATs can be falsely negative. If you continue to have symptoms, even with a negative RAT, stay home until you are feeling better.

c. **Returning to Learning activities:**

- Returning to **on-campus activities** –return to on-campus activities once you are symptom-free, following the University guidelines.
- Returning to clinical sessions **in clinical settings or community placements** – Due to the risk of transmission to potentially vulnerable patients and to avoid transmission within health care settings, follow the [Heath Care Workforce Screening & Return to Work Guidance](#) for timing of return to program.

d. Contact the [appropriate UGME administrative staff](#) as per the [Attendance and Absence policy](#).

e. Work with administrator to schedule missed learning opportunities following [the Pre-Clerkship Attendance and Absence Policy](#).

f. Please contact UGME and/or OSA if you need any support or have questions.

**Scenario 2 - What do I do if come into contact with someone who is COVID positive? \***

\*An individual who has either a positive PCR test or a positive rapid antigen test is COVID positive. They may have been infectious for 2-3 days before developing symptoms.

- a. If you have any [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, follow steps in Scenario 1.
- b. If you do **not** have any symptoms of COVID-19:
  - You may continue to attend school and your clinical learning activities.
  - Self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19.
  - We suggest doing a RAT testing intermittently over the next 10 days, particularly if your contact was a household contact

**Scenario 3 - What do I do if I have a positive Home Rapid Antigen test?**

Home Rapid antigen testing (RAT) has high specificity (if you have a positive RAT you likely have COVID) but it does not have a high sensitivity (a negative test does not exclude you having COVID). If you have [symptoms](#) that might be COVID-19, follow steps in Section 1.

If you have a positive home rapid antigen test, please do the following:

- Stay home and self-isolate. You do not need any additional testing.
- **Returning to on-campus activities** – Stay home and [self-isolate](#) for 5 days from the date of your test result, or until 24 hours after fever has resolved (without use of fever-reducing medications) and your symptoms have significantly improved for 48 h, whichever comes later. If you meet this criteria, you may return to campus on day 6.

- **Returning to clinical settings or community placements** – Follow the [Heath Care Workforce Screening & Return to Work Guidance](#). Note that Day Zero is the day that you had your positive RAT, or developed symptoms, whichever came first. The earliest you can return is Day 6, if you are feeling better.
- Contact the appropriate UGME administrative staff as per [the Pre-Clerkship Attendance and Absence Policy](#).
- We suggest you inform your close contacts (anyone you were in close contact with, without appropriate PPE, in the 2-3 days prior to developing symptoms or testing positive). If you were in a clinical setting, notify the clinical manager in the clinical facility. If unsure who that is, please contact your UGME administrator or Year Chair.
- Please contact UGME and/or OSA if you need any support or have questions.

#### **Scenario 4 - What if I am scheduled for a learning experience on a clinical unit where there is a COVID-19 Outbreak?**

Some pre-clerkship learning (e.g., DSPEs in Clinical Skills courses) occurs in SHA facilities. The SHA COVID-19 outbreak management guidelines can be found [here](#). If a clinical learning session is scheduled on a confirmed outbreak unit, the session will typically be cancelled or rescheduled. Course leadership will make that decision in collaboration with UGME leadership depending on the nature of the session, and on rare occasions the session may proceed. Students will be informed if a session needs to be cancelled or rescheduled due to an outbreak.

Shadowing should not take place on a clinical unit where there is a COVID-19 confirmed outbreak, to reduce transmission risk and to avoid unnecessary testing. A full list of COVID-19 outbreak units is available [here](#); please check that list prior to shadowing to ensure you will not be on an outbreak unit. If in doubt, contact your clinical supervisor for your shadowing or your Year Chair/Coordinator.

#### **Scenario 5 – What do I do about missed learning if I am sick?**

Contingency plan for missed learning if self-isolation is required:

- if a missed learning experience can be rescheduled or offered in an alternative format, then the administrative coordinator will notify you of the changes and adjust one45.
  - Factors that determine if a learning experience can be rescheduled or offered in an alternative format include whether objectives of the learning experience can be met, whether the learning experience can be replicated or not, and whether it is feasible to reschedule or offer an alternative format.
- If a missed learning experience cannot be rescheduled or offered in an alternative format, then we will apply sick time based on the [Pre-Clerkship Attendance and Absence Policy](#). Students should engage in self-directed learning using available learning resources.

All plans will be developed with the student by the UGME administrative staff in consultation with Year Chair and relevant [Course/Module Director](#).

### Scenario 6 - What if I have other questions, or specific needs?

If you have specific needs and would like to explore accommodation of these needs, please reach out to the Office of Student Affairs for support in bringing forward any accommodation requests. If you have any questions, please contact your Year Chair/ Year Site Coordinator (information below), Drs. Malin or McKague, and we will be happy to answer them. You are also welcome to direct questions through your class reps.

### How can I keep myself, and others, as safe as possible?

In all learning activities, please consistently take the following steps to keep yourself, and everyone else, as safe as possible:

- Self-monitor daily for [symptoms of COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses](#).
- Follow all PPE recommendations for the unit you are on.
- Maintain hand hygiene.
- **If you have any symptoms of respiratory illness, even very mild, please stay home/go home until you are better**

### Program Contacts:

List of Year and Site Chairs & Program Director:

Year 1 Chair	Dr. Nicole Shedden	Saskatoon	<a href="mailto:nks904@usask.ca">nks904@usask.ca</a>
Year 1 Site Coordinators	Dr. Helen Chang Dr. Jacqueline Kraushaar	Regina	<a href="mailto:woodrabbit@sasktel.net">woodrabbit@sasktel.net</a> <a href="mailto:jacqueline.kraushaar@usask.ca">jacqueline.kraushaar@usask.ca</a>
Year 2 Chair	Dr. Jacqueline Kraushaar	Regina	<a href="mailto:jacqueline.kraushaar@usask.ca">jacqueline.kraushaar@usask.ca</a>
Year 2 Site Coordinator	Dr. Schaana Van de Kamp	Saskatoon	<a href="mailto:schaana.v@usask.ca">schaana.v@usask.ca</a>

Please see the list of UGME Pre-Clerkship Administrative Staff to contact at your home site below.

Site	Name	Course	Year	email
Saskatoon	Cheryl Pfeifer	Foundations	year 1 & 2	<a href="mailto:cheryl.pfeifer@usask.ca">cheryl.pfeifer@usask.ca</a>

	Sonja MacDonald	Medicine & Society, Clinical Skills, Clinical Integration	year 1 & 2	<a href="mailto:sonja.macdonald@usask.ca">sonja.macdonald@usask.ca</a>
	Tamara Hominuke	Success in Medical School I-IV, OSCE	all years	<a href="mailto:tamara.hominuke@usask.ca">tamara.hominuke@usask.ca</a>
Regina	Cassie Eskra	All courses	year 1, 2	<a href="mailto:Cassandra.Eskra@saskhealthauthority.ca">Cassandra.Eskra@saskhealthauthority.ca</a>

## 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 and link
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