



Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.



March 17, 2021

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT - COVID-19 Variants of Concern (VOC) Increasing

Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA) public health officials are advising individuals that there has been a significant increase in COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC) in Saskatchewan including the north. These VOCs are 30-70 per cent more transmissible, meaning they spread more easily thus it's more important than ever before to follow the Public Health Order. The modelling for VOC indicates that youth are more at risk – this is in fact a trend we are noting. Getting tested, knowing your COVID-19 status and following the safety guidelines can help protect yourself, your family and your community.

Testing continues to be available to anyone who requests it, whether they have symptoms or not. Symptoms may vary in different age groups. Some of the more commonly reported symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle and/or joint aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Conjunctivitis
- Loss of appetite (difficulty feeding for children)
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Nausea/vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Runny nose
- Chills
- Loss of sense of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing

If you have had or develop symptoms of COVID-19, immediately self-isolate and call HealthLine 811, or your community health center for direction.

Our process for testing, contact tracing, isolating along with strict adherence to public health measures are effective in managing these variants. Prevention remains the best way to protect oneself and is more critical now than ever before. These VOCs put extra pressure on us and can spread very easily. That's why it's critical to:

- Avoid non-essential travel
- Stay home if you are experiencing symptoms
- Maintain physical distancing of at least six feet or two metres
- Wash your hands frequently and wear mask in indoor public places
- Not share any food or drink, even in break rooms
- Get tested if you are experiencing even mild symptoms.

The Health Canada COVID Alert app is available to all Saskatchewan residents at no cost in the Apple and Google Play app store. The app is another tool available to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 by letting people know of possible exposures without sharing any personal information. For more information, visit the [COVID-19 Apps webpage](#). Remember, anyone at any age can contract COVID-19, so be kind to each other and follow the recommended practices.

Thank you.

Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka, Medical Health Officer