Indigenous Services Canada | Services aux Autochtones Canada

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ATTN: First Nation community members across Saskatchewan – Holiday Message

How we spend the coming holiday season will set the stage for COVID-19 in the New Year. Now is not the time to let our guard down, especially with the emergence of the new variant of concern, Omicron. The Delta variant is still circulating in our province and we do not want the upcoming holiday season to cause a fifth wave.

With the winter months ahead of us and the holiday season approaching, it is important that we stick to our public health measures and encourage others to do the same. These include:

- If you are not vaccinated, do not gather with friends and family this holiday season. Get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect your loved ones and community.
- Keep gatherings small, with only two or three other households, where everyone is vaccinated.
- Wear a well-fit, non-medical mask indoors. For those that are at high risk, medical masks are recommended.
- Do not host or attend gatherings if you feel unwell. Even if you have mild symptoms, seek testing as soon as possible, regardless of your vaccination status.
- Meet and greet outdoors as much as possible. The risk of transmission is not zero, but it is much lower than meeting inside. If meeting inside, physically distance and ensure good ventilation.
- Avoid all non-essential travel wherever possible; international travel remains risky.

Currently, there is high COVID-19 transmission among children under 12. In fact, during this fourth wave of the pandemic, those 0-11 years of age have accounted for nearly one third of all the cases in First Nation communities since September. The good news is that there is now a COVID-19 vaccine that is safe, effective and available for children 5-11 years old.

Booster dose eligibility has just expanded. Booster doses are now available to community members 18 years of age and older and to those who have underlying health conditions that put them at more risk for severe illness due to COVID-19. A booster dose enhances your protection against COVID-19 and its variants. **Everyone in your household that is eligible for a vaccine, including booster doses, should get vaccinated before Christmas for a safe and happy new year.**

Make sure you're on the nice list this holiday season – get vaccinated as soon as possible and keep up with your public health measures. Wishing you and your family a safe holiday season.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ibrahim Khan, Medical Health Officer
Indigenous Services Canada, SK Region

Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka, Medical Health Officer
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CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR'S SAFELY

Protect yourself and protect others. The COVID-19 vaccine is the best, long-term way to fight against the virus. Get vaccinated today.

- **The safest way to celebrate or enjoy the holidays is with members of your household.**
- **The best gift you can give this year is making sure that all eligible people in your household are vaccinated.**
- **Children ages 5 to 11 years are now eligible for vaccine.**
- **Please make sure your children receive their first dose of vaccine as soon as possible.**

The following are other recommendations to help keep you and others safe this holiday season.

Stay home and away from others if you or a member of your household:

- are isolating as they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are waiting for test results
- are isolating as they have been in close contact with someone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19
- feel sick or have any symptoms of COVID-19, even if mild
- have returned home to Canada within the past 14 days

Plan low risk activities:

- indoor celebrations with your household
- virtual holiday and religious celebrations
- drop-off or physically distanced doorstep gift exchanges
- outdoor celebrations in open spaces where people can stay at 6 feet (2 metres) apart or wear non-medical masks
- keep it local, minimize non-essential travel to other communities

Planning to have people from outside your home over:

- keep the gathering small
- encourage the wearing of non-medical masks
- have hand sanitizer available—keep it out of the reach of children and supervise its use
- weather permitting, gather outside or keep windows open to improve ventilation
- keep it quiet so that people can talk without being close together or raising their voices
- when eating or drinking stay 6 feet (2 metres) from non-household members

Common symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fever (38˚C or higher)
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle or joint aches & pains
- Sore throat
- Chills
- Runny nose
- Pink eye
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Altered sense of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing

Avoid high risk activities:

- crowded gatherings with people outside your household, particularly:
  - in closed spaces with poor ventilation
  - in places where many people are gathered
  - when in close-contact, such as close range conversations
  - when singing, shouting or breathing heavily (for example, while dancing)
- gathering with people from different communities, particularly those from areas with high COVID-19 activity
- travelling to or from areas with high COVID-19 activity
- shopping in crowded stores
- dining with members outside your immediate household
- Look at your own risk in every situation and do everything you can to lower it.

Stay up to date on the current COVID-19 situation:

- if there is an outbreak in your community, don't gather with people from outside your household
- don't travel to areas with an outbreak
- follow the advice from your local health services and public health officials

NORTHERN INTER-TRIBAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Stay safe this holiday season!