



April 1, 2021

**Dear Residents of Altona and surrounding area:**

### **IMPORTANT UPDATE ABOUT OUR LOCAL HEALTH SERVICES**

This letter is in follow-up to our March 26 notification that emergency department services at Altona Community Memorial Health Centre will be temporarily unavailable as of April 1 while we work to stabilize and add to the nursing workforce.

An urgent care centre will be opening April 6 at Altona Community Memorial Health Centre to serve the health-care needs of residents in the area while work continues to restore 24/7 emergency department services. The urgent care centre will be open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the facility's emergency department space.

Non-life-threatening injuries and ailments have represented the vast majority of cases seen in the emergency department. These types of cases will continue to be seen in the temporary urgent care centre.

**We are committed to restoring 24/7 emergency department services in Altona.** Temporarily moving to an urgent care model will allow site and regional leadership to address staffing challenges that have caused unexpected service disruptions over the past year. This necessary work will allow us to build a stronger and more reliably available emergency department that provides a consistently high level of emergent care 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

### **What You Can Expect**

This temporary urgent care centre at Altona Community Memorial Health Centre is able to diagnose and provide treatment for a wide variety of urgent but non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries, including:

- Mishaps causing minor injury;
- Cuts;
- Breathing difficulties, such as mild to moderate asthma;
- Diagnostic services, including X-rays and laboratory tests;
- Eye irritation and redness;
- Fever or flu;
- Minor broken bones and fractures in fingers or toes;
- Moderate back problems;
- Severe sore throat or cough;
- Skin rashes and infections;
- Sprains and strains;
- Urinary tract infections; and
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or dehydration.

**The fastest way to get help in a medical emergency is to dial 911.**

Paramedics are highly trained to provide a wide array of care on site and on the way to hospital, including triaging and treating injuries and medical emergencies. While the service change is in effect, patients with higher acuity needs will be transported to other sites to receive the care they need. EMS has been directed to transport patients to other sites to receive the care they need. This would include Boundary Trails Health Centre in Morden/Winkler and Morris General Hospital, both of which are about 40 kilometres away.

**How will this Impact Inpatient Services at the Altona Community Memorial Health Centre?**

These changes will not affect hospital in-patient services at the Altona Community Memorial Health Centre.

**Accessing Primary Care (Medical Clinic Services)**

Access to primary care services will continue. We encourage you to continue accessing primary health care as you have, i.e. Altona Medical Clinic.

All general, less serious health care needs can be addressed by calling Health Links–Info Santé at 1-888-315-9257.

**Virtual Town Hall**

We know you have questions and concerns. **A virtual town hall meeting has been scheduled on Monday, April 12 at 7 p.m. to provide more information and to respond to questions.**

- Individuals interested in virtually attending via Zoom can register for the town hall by going online to [https://ca01web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_t7d1WwET7uiDgW84dr6fA](https://ca01web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_t7d1WwET7uiDgW84dr6fA).
- The registration link will also be posted online in the events section at Altona.ca before April 7.
- Once you are registered, a link with the details on how to join the town hall will be emailed to your inbox.
- A call-in phone number will also be provided for those residents without Internet access to call and listen.

In the meantime, for more information, please contact Josh Gruninger, Director - Acute Community Hospitals, at [jgruninger@southernhealth.ca](mailto:jgruninger@southernhealth.ca) or Noreen Shirliff, Regional Lead - Acute Care and Chief Nursing Officer at [nshirliff@southernhealth.ca](mailto:nshirliff@southernhealth.ca); ph. 204-388-2056.

We will continue to provide updates on our progress in restoring emergency department services.

**Southern Health-Santé Sud would like to take this opportunity to thank health care providers for their continued hard work and their dedication throughout this period. We also thank the community for your patience and understanding during this time.**

Sincerely,



**Jane Curtis**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

JC/lg