

A pandemic has been declared by the World Health Organization, these are the various strategies being recommended to all Manitobans to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Social distancing for all Manitobans include:

- minimizing prolonged (more than 10 minutes), close (less than two metres) contact between other individuals in public;
- avoiding greetings that involve touching such as handshakes;

Some other steps we can take:

- disinfecting frequently used surfaces;
- following public health advice related to self-monitoring and self-isolation if you have travelled or have been exposed to someone ill with the virus; and
- considering avoiding travel, crowded places and events, especially if you are at a higher risk.

Note: Those at the greatest risk of severe outcomes include those over 65 years of age, those with underlying medical conditions and those with compromised immune systems. Public health officials are also reminding all Manitobans to frequently wash their hands, cough and sneeze into their sleeves and to stay home when sick.

Employers should review their business continuity plans and take steps to ensure their employees can:

- stay home when ill, without facing barriers such as the requirement for sick notes; and
- work from home if possible.

Employers should also consider:

- discontinuing non-essential work-related travel outside of Manitoba; and
- encouraging virtual meetings to reduce prolonged, close contact between individuals.

Here are the links to both the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba information websites:

Government of Canada information;

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>

Manitoba Government Information

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html>

As a licensed Optician here is some information

- The virus that causes COVID-19 is very likely susceptible to the same alcohol- and bleach-based disinfectants that many dispensaries and optometric clinics commonly use to disinfect ophthalmic instruments and office furniture. To prevent COVID-19 transmission, the same disinfection practices already used to prevent office-based spread of other viral pathogens are recommended before and after every patient encounter. This includes the cleaning of all instruments and optometric frames etc. after

each use. CDC guidelines on tools and rubbing alcohol should be used on all plastic tools such as DMV's are small plungers used to insert and remove hard contact lenses and some soft.

Recommended protocols when scheduling or seeing patients

- When phoning about visit reminders, ask to reschedule appointments for patients with nonurgent ophthalmic problems who have a respiratory illness, fever or returned from a high-risk area within the past 2 weeks.
- Patients who come to an appointment should be asked before entering the waiting room about respiratory illness and if they or a family member have traveled to a high-risk area in the past 14 days. If they answer yes to either question, they should be sent home and told to speak to their primary care physician.

A question asked by an OOM member:

Can I put a sign on my door or entrance of my dispensary advising people who may be sick to reschedule or come back at a later date?

It is up to the individual dispensary whether they want to use a sign at their entrance, a message on their answering machine advising all individuals that if they have the following symptoms: fever and respiratory symptoms including cough and shortness of breath, and who have recently traveled internationally, particularly to areas with known outbreaks (China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea), or have had contact with people who have recently come back from one of these countries, that they should seek medical assistance and/or call health links for next steps advice.

Here is some other wording:

For the safety of our staff and other clients, we have implemented the following restrictions:

DO NOT enter if you have returned from international travel – including to the United States – in the last 14 days.

DO NOT enter if you are under direction to self-monitor or self-isolate.

DO NOT enter if you are experiencing any of the following cold/flu symptoms: • Cough • Fever • Runny Nose • Sore Throat • Weakness • Headache

Please contact our business by phone an appointment will be made for you at a later date.

Please note all this is suggestive and not regulatory. We do encourage people to take steps to keep themselves and loved ones healthy.

The OOM cares about you and your families and to minimize contact you have with members of the public we are advising it is best to that all documents you need to send to OOM be done by email or fax. We have fair amount of walk in traffic as potential clients of the other two businesses we share our floor with.

Contact information:

Registrar's email: mmartinstrong@optm.ca

Administrative Assistant: oom@optm.ca

Our phone number: 204 222 8404

Fax : 204 222 5296

Please keep checking the Manitoba Health's website for updates and follow their advice. It is all about keeping each other safe and healthy.