

General Information

Role of Stakeholders

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Role of Individuals Infected With/Exposed to Communicable Diseases

Individuals exposed to communicable diseases play an important role in communicable disease prevention and control. This includes their responsibility to seek timely medical attention when ill; to follow through with physician's treatment recommendations; and to take all reasonable measures to significantly reduce the risk of infecting others. In the case of Category II communicable diseases, there is also a responsibility to disclose information on their contacts and either inform their contacts or ask the physician or nurse to do so.¹

Role of Physicians and Nurses

Physicians and nurses are the front line health care professionals that clients will see when they have health concerns. These health care providers are required to report to the local Medical Health Officer (MHO) as soon as possible after forming an opinion of infection with a Category I or Category II Communicable Disease. This means that reports are to be made regarding both known and suspected cases. Early identification and reporting facilitates the early initiation of interventions that are vital to control the spread of communicable diseases.²

Role of Medical Health Officers

Each regional health authority (RHA), Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA), and First Nations Inuit Health (FNIH), Health Canada has a designated MHO who, together with other public health staff, is responsible for the control of communicable diseases in their jurisdiction. The MHO is a designated public health officer and has specific responsibilities under *The Public Health Act, 1994*. For the purposes of clause 11(2) (b) of the Act, the qualifications of a MHO are prescribed in *The Public Health Officers Regulations*.

¹ *The Public Health Act, 1994, c.P-37.1, s.33.*

² *The Public Health Act, 1994, c.P-37.1, s.34; 2003, c.29, s.53.*



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Role of Health Authorities

It is the responsibility of each RHA, NITHA, and FNIH to ensure reports of communicable diseases are received, reviewed and generally managed during regular work hours. MHOs in their health jurisdictions have identified specific individuals that have the lead responsibility for managing these reports to ensure that documentation of cases and outbreaks occurs in the approved format within the specified timeframes. When applicable, reports will also be sent to other provincial public health jurisdictions.

In situations where a RHA, NITHA, or FNIH does not have an MHO, or when the MHO is absent, another MHO will cover that jurisdiction, as per *The Regional Health Services Act*, according to an established coverage arrangement. See [Appendix E - Contact Information for Regional Health Authorities and First Nations Health Agencies](#).

Role of Saskatchewan Regional Health Authorities

Each RHA has public health staff including Communicable Disease Coordinators, Public Health Inspectors, Public Health Nurses, and others working with the MHO to assist in communicable disease control. They are responsible for the public health follow up of individual cases and contacts that reside within the RHA's jurisdiction.

Role of First Nations Health Agencies

FNIH and NITHA work with First Nations organizations and communities within their jurisdiction, to carry out activities aimed at assisting people to keep healthy. This includes preventing or minimizing the acute and chronic impacts of communicable diseases.

FNIH and NITHA are each responsible for the coordination and public health follow up of individual cases and contacts that reside in First Nations communities in their jurisdiction. The follow up is provided by Community Health Nurses (CHNs) and Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) employed by the First Nation or FNIH.



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Role of the Ministry of Health, Population Health Branch

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Health, Population Health Branch (PHB) aims to enhance the health status and well-being of Saskatchewan citizens through surveillance, prevention and control of communicable diseases and the support of public health services. In the area of communicable disease control, PHB:

- Coordinates the development of provincial standards, policies and procedures for the prevention and control of communicable diseases.
- Provides consultation to local MHOs and health agencies as required.
- Provides direct linkages to other provinces and other jurisdictions, such as the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) Centre for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the World Health Organization (WHO), etc.
- Reports nationally notifiable communicable diseases to PHAC for national disease surveillance and statistical summaries (e.g., Canadian Communicable Disease Report, Disease Surveillance On-Line, etc.).
- Disseminates regular, and ad-hoc reports to health regions, First Nations Agencies and Saskatchewan Ministry of Health using information reported through the electronic case management and surveillance system.
- Provides vaccines and some medications for the prevention and control of specific communicable diseases. See [Appendix D - Publicly Funded Medications for Chemoprophylaxis](#).
- Conducts ongoing surveillance of communicable disease for unusual health events and emerging communicable disease trends and alerts the public health community and others.
- Contributes to national public health standards and guidelines through participation on federal/provincial/territorial (FPT) committees and working groups.
- Takes a leadership role to facilitate coordination and management of significant health issues that have intersectoral needs.



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Role of Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory

The Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory (SDCL) provides a wide range of public health and reference testing services utilizing current technology and research methods.

SDCL:

- Provides laboratory testing to assist in the diagnosis, treatment and confirmation of communicable diseases in individuals and to assist with the assessment of communicable disease outbreaks including waterborne and food-borne disease outbreaks.
- Provides infectious disease surveillance information enabling early detection of outbreaks and monitoring of disease trends.
- Provides copies of notifiable communicable disease laboratory reports to MHOs, the ordering practitioner and Saskatchewan Ministry of Health.
- Provides other public health services in the field of environmental health (e.g., analyze water samples, measure toxins to assess and identify environmental hazards, etc.).

*The Public Health Act, 1994*³ requires all microbiology labs to report notifiable communicable diseases in a timely manner.

Role of Public Health Agency of Canada

PHAC was established to promote and protect the health of Canadians through leadership, partnership, innovation and action in public health. Several departments of PHAC provide support to the provinces and territories:

- National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) services include such things as confirmation of tests (e.g., Lyme disease), sub-typing of bacteria and viruses, diagnosis of some diseases (e.g., Hantavirus), surveillance, etc.
- Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response (CEPR) responsibilities include such things as developing and maintaining national emergency response plans for PHAC.
- Pandemic Preparedness Secretariat (PPS).
- Centre for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control (CIDPC) assists in the coordination, investigation and case management of communicable diseases and outbreaks that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

³ *The Public Health Act, 1994*, c.P-37.1, s.32; 2003, c.29, s.52; 2004, c.46, s.12; 1994, c.P-37.1, s.36; 2003, c.29, s.55; 2004, c.46, s.13.



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- Canadian Field Epidemiology Program (CFEP) deploys epidemiologists to the field upon request to support investigations to control diseases of local, provincial, territorial, national or international concern. CFEP also provides resources for technical and investigative support of individual cases and during outbreaks when required.
- Provides expertise in unusual disease occurrence.
- Summarizes nationally notifiable diseases for inclusion in the Canadian Communicable Disease Report.

Role of Other Individuals and Agencies

Other agencies and individuals play a role in communicable disease control, including outbreaks in Saskatchewan. These include schools, the CFIA, local veterinarians, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment, Canadian Blood Services, and others depending on the specific food borne illnesses, waterborne illnesses, vector-borne and zoonotic diseases.



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References

Government of Saskatchewan. (2007). *The Public Health Act, 1994*. Regina, SK: Queens Printer Saskatchewan.

