



*We will be the healthiest community we can be!*

Summer 2020

Volume 9 Issue 1

## Atikokan Family Health Team

# NEWSLETTER

### Executive Director's Annual Review

## Champions of change: Family Health Team staff respond to the pandemic

#### Karen Lusignan, Executive Director

2019/20 was another year of change and growth for the Atikokan Family Health Team. Thanks to our Board of Directors and dedicated staff, our team remained focused and committed to providing quality care and was proud to report that nearly all of our Quality Improvement initiatives yielded positive progress throughout the year.

All of our inter-health professionals (IHPs) worked very hard in the past year to provide home visits to immobile or homebound patients to increase access and continued to offer our evening clinics until the COVID 19 pandemic hit in March 2020. Throughout the year our team was able to provide care to approximately 1,900 patients

Our community continued to be at a full Physician and Nurse Practitioner complement and to date 98.6% of our population is rostered or assigned. This has been a very positive change for our community and our patient satisfaction has improved significantly, with 98% of

**All of our services and programs are available by appointment ONLY.**  
**Please call 597-8781 ex. 0**  
**Monday to Friday 8:30 am - 4:30 pm;**  
**CLOSED noon - 1 pm.**  
**Spirometry testing and evening appointments will resume soon.**

patients reporting they were satisfied with how long it took to get an appointment with a Primary Care Provider and 82% of patients surveyed also reported that they were satisfied with the amount of time spent with their provider.

The Atikokan Family Health Team has worked very hard to ensure that it is integrated with as many partners in our region as possible and collaborated with those partners wherever possible to ensure that our patients received the best care possible.

I am a member of the Rainy River District Ontario Health Team (RRD OHT) working group and interim Co-Chair. The RRD OHT working group submitted a self-assessment in December 2019. The next wave of Ontario Health Teams was to be announced in March 2020 and we were hopeful that we would be asked to submit a full assessment, however with the COVID 19 pandemic, all Ontario Health Team efforts have been put on hold until further notice.

We remained the lead for our local Palliative Care Team, with a focus on continuing to expand our understanding of palliative care and advanced care

planning. Multiple team members attended training and we provided community educational events as well.

We continued to provide administrative support to the Caregiver's committee, which consists of local and regional organizations that contributed, in some way, to the care and services of patients and we ensured that a team member was present at Atikokan Inter-Agency meetings whenever possible, to ensure our team was always up-to-date on changes and additions to services in our community.

Our team also held monthly 'Collaborative Care' meetings, which are designed to be a platform of discussion to streamline processes between the AFHT and our affiliated Physicians' group, the Atikokan Medical Associates. Members of management, admin, IHP and Physician staff from both teams were invited to attend the meetings. Our NPs and Physicians continued to work hand in hand sharing care with multiple patients.

In March 2020 our team began offering essential FHT services only and with just twenty-four hours of notice we became the COVID 19 Assessment Centre. Throughout the pandemic staff have been champions of change! The way we provide health care has moved to virtual and phone visits whenever possible.

I would like to thank our Board and amazing staff for all their hard work and dedication throughout the year. We truly are a team and I am blessed to work with such dedicated professionals!

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## Breast-start Program

# Building a healthy foundation for your baby

Lisa Campbell, RN

Build a healthy foundation with regular pre-natal and Well Baby Check-ups!

If you have been referred to the Breast-start program at the Family Health Team, you will be closely followed by the Registered Nurse during your pre-natal and post-partum

journey. We also have educated, trained staff who will assist you with breast-feeding support, hospital grade breast pump rental, and shields if required.

If you have not already been referred, please call the Family Health Team 597-8781 to set up an appointment. Our team works closely together to ensure your journey is memorable.

As we continue this journey during the Covid-19 pandemic, your health care providers will help you through this together. The Family Health Team is here to protect you and your family. We are scheduling Pre-natal/Post-natal visits usually in the mornings.

### Continue to practise good hygiene

COVID-19 is a contagious disease. Proper hygiene practices will help lower your chance of getting it or spreading it. You should continue to do the following:

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least twenty seconds or use an **alcohol-based hand sanitizer** containing at least 70% alcohol
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Dispose of used tissues in a lined waste container and then wash your hands

### Stage Three re-opening

In Stage Three of re-opening, social gatherings and events are allowed to take place with a maximum of fifty people



### Meningococcal conjugate (Men-C-C)

is required by law for all children attending school in Ontario, unless exempted.

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria known as

indoors and one hundred people outdoors.

Remember to always maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from people outside of your social circle, and to wear a mask when distancing is a challenge.

### Immunizations

Keeping up with routine immunizations protects your new baby from a variety of diseases.

DTaP-IPV-Hib vaccine (Pediactel) is a combined vaccine that protects children against five diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, and serious diseases like meningitis caused by haemophilus influenzae type b. Given at two, four, six, and eighteen months.

Pneumococcal conjugate (Pnevnar 13) vaccine protects children against invasive pneumococcal infections such as pneumonia, bacteraemia (infection of the blood), and meningitis (infection of the brain). Given at two, four, and twelve months.

Rotavirus (Rotateq) vaccine Rotavirus is a common infection causing vomiting and diarrhea in infants and children. It is very contagious, spreading easily from children who are already infected to other infants, children, and sometimes adults. Most children are infected with rotavirus at least once by five years of age. Given at two, four, and six months.

*Neisseria meningitidis* (commonly known as meningococcus). Meningococcal disease is a very serious infection. It occurs in people who have either come in contact with a healthy person known as a 'carrier' of meningococci bacteria or come in contact with a sick person with meningococcal disease. Given at twelve months.

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is a three-in-one needle that protects against measles, mumps, and rubella (German measles). It should be given to children soon after their first birthday and a second dose at four to six years of age with the measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella (MMRV) vaccine. Given at twelve months.

Varicella (chickenpox) (Var) vaccine. Although the one-dose chickenpox vaccine program has decreased hospitalization from chickenpox infection, some children are still at risk of becoming infected after one dose. Giving two doses will further protect children against chickenpox and reduce the total number of cases, as well as complications. Chickenpox can be very severe or even life threatening to newborn babies, and anyone with a weak immune system. Given at fifteen months.

For more information regarding the Pre-natal (Breast-start) Family Health Team Program, please call 597-8781

# AFHT Diabetes program

**Kristin St. Pierre, RN**

People living with diabetes, especially those with poor glycemic control (high blood sugars) have an increased risk for some infections, including Coronavirus (COVID-19). COVID-19 can cause more severe symptoms and complications in some people living with diabetes, the elderly, and those with other chronic conditions such as heart disease and lung disease. It is important to minimize this risk by being proactive with your prevention strategies.

There are multiple steps that can be taken in order to prepare for any illness during these uncertain times. These include:

- Gather the contact information for your doctors/nurse practitioners, FHT/clinic, pharmacy and your insurance
- Write down the names and doses of your medications
- Have enough medication for one to two weeks in case you cannot get to out to refill your prescriptions
- Ensure you have enough device supplies as well (i.e. pump, pen, and monitor supplies, etc.)
- Ensure all your medications have refills available, so you do not have to leave the house if you get ill
- Have extra supplies like rubbing alcohol, hand sanitizers, and soap to wash your hands
- Keep simple sugars (i.e. glucose tablets) on-hand in case you need to treat low blood sugar which may occur more frequently with illness due to changes to eating patterns
- Have glucagon available in case of a significant low blood sugar (if taking insulin or medications that can cause low blood sugar)
- Have ketone strips available in case of illness (if you have type 1 diabetes)

Anyone enrolled in the AFHT Diabetes Program will continue to be contacted regularly for routine screening and assessments, and is encouraged to call with any issues or questions that may arise. Also, anyone newly diagnosed with pre-diabetes, type 1 or type 2 diabetes, or gestational diabetes, is welcome to the diabetes program. Though our services offered have shifted to a more virtual approach, our ongoing support will continue.

## Mental Health Counselling

**Alan Poelman, Mental Health Counsellor**

Due to Covid-19 AFHT Mental Health Counselling has been provided primarily through telephone or virtual conferencing. And, although speaking with a counsellor is still provided through these venues, face-to-face visits have been allotted for those who have difficulty with phone or internet access.

Staying vigilant by adhering to recommended provincial guidelines for COVID-19, such as social distancing is of the utmost importance. Individuals should still be keeping up with practices such as: appropriate socialization, exercise/outdoor activities, and self-care management.

If you do need to speak with someone, for any reason, don't hesitate to reach out to the Atikokan Family Health Team at 597-8781.



*For drive-thru testing, come at the appointed time and park between the pylons on the left side of the Family Health Team office.*

## Booking a COVID-19 swab

**Laura Hendren, NP**

The Family Health Team staff take calls from people who have been exposed to COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or would like to be tested for other reasons (e.g., for work or reassurance).

Our phone lines are open from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday (closed 12-1 for lunch). However, we appreciate it if you call earlier in the day. We perform the swabs outside of the Family Health Team building by appointment only. If you arrive at our front door without an appointment, you will not be allowed inside for safety reasons.

At the time of your appointment, please park at the side door, which is around the left side of our building. We may have swabs booked right before or after yours, so it is very important that you show up at the exact time of your appointment. If you are even five minutes early or late, this invades the privacy of other patients who many not want you to know they are being tested.

The result will take about five days; you are welcome to look for it online at [covid19results.ehealthontario.ca](https://covid19results.ehealthontario.ca). If you have questions about this process, or think you should be tested, please call 597-8781. Thank you for helping to keep our patients, and our staff, safe!

**If you have any questions, or would like to discuss your medications, please call 597-8781 to make an appointment with our pharmacist.**



## Atikokan Family Health Team

# COVID-19, stress, and comfort foods

### Samantha Holmgren, Dietitian

We've all gone through a roller coaster of emotions this year, and we don't know how long the ride will last. Naturally, you might be finding yourself eating more comfort foods as the stress you're feeling increases your hunger. (Though some people may have the opposite problem and forget to eat)

There is nothing wrong with eating for emotional reasons. In fact, it can sometimes be extremely helpful. But many people turn to food as their first option to cope with stress, and that is when emotional eating becomes problematic.

If this is where you are at, ask yourself these three questions when you reach for food:

- Am I hungry?
- Is there something else I need?
- Will I enjoy this?

#### Am I hungry?

If you are hungry, will the treat satisfy you? Would you feel better with something else, or by adding another part to your treat? For example, if you're hungry and you eat cookies, you'll likely not be satisfied for long. You might be better satisfied by first having a meal (even a sandwich or some nuts and fruit) and then have the cookies for dessert.

#### Is there something else I need?

When you aren't hungry, there may be something else you need. The classic triggers are: Bored,



Lonely, Angry, Sad, Tired, and Stress. If you are able to address your needs directly, the desire for food may evaporate all together (as long as you're not physically hungry).

#### Will I enjoy this?

When you have gotten into the habit of eating chips in the evening, do you even enjoy them? Do you even taste them any more? Or are you simply having it out of habit?

If you won't enjoy the treat, what is the point of having it?

**If you are struggling with emotional eating**, call the family health team and ask for an appointment with the dietitian. Appointments are available by phone or zoom.

And for info on eating well during COVID (including how to support your immune system, and some healthy and delicious alternatives) look for 'Public COVID resources' at [PrimaryCareDietitian Association.org](http://PrimaryCareDietitianAssociation.org)

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Ph: 807-597-8781 Fax: 597-6008

Hours: Monday to Friday (8:30 am - noon, 1 - 4:30 pm)

All services by appointment ONLY

## Check your BP

### Jackie King, RPN

High blood pressure affects one in five Canadians. It is the number one risk factor for stroke and a major risk factor for heart disease, so it is very important that it is properly controlled. Yet many people with high blood pressure don't even know they have it. You can't see it. You can't feel it. But the good news is that you can control it.

If you haven't had your blood pressure checked in the last year, now is the time to book an appointment!

Call the Atikokan Family Health Team to book your blood pressure check with Jackie 597-8781

## Anticoagulation (INR) program

### Ashley McEvoy, RPN

Since the pandemic, we are now running our services a little differently, with the goal of keeping our patients and staff as safe as possible.

For the blood test (INR), by appointment only, patients drive into the parking lot and wait in their vehicle with their mask on. It is very important to arrive on time for each appointment, not too early or not too late. The nurse will come outside to the vehicle and perform the test.

There are patients who have appointments inside the building and we are taking all the necessary precautions. For example, all patients who enter the building are screened, a mask is worn, and hand sanitizer is provided upon entering.

Some INR patients will need other services as well, and they will still come into the FHT for care. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me 597-8781.