

Media Release



99 Cornish Avenue
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CARING • RESPECT • TRUST

November 5, 2024

NEED HEALTH-CARE ANSWERS RIGHT AWAY? CALL HEALTH LINKS – INFO SANTÉ!

Thirty years ago, Health Links – Info Santé was launched with one nurse responding to patients' voicemails every afternoon: Canada's first nurse-based triage system.

Today, Health Links – Info Santé operates in real time 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, responding to thousands of calls across the province and play a crucial role in clinical support, improving access and flow in the health-care system.

"Health Links – Info Santé is frequently the first point of contact with a nurse in the health system," said Caroline DeKeyster, MHC President and CEO. "Our nurses provide immediate care and are the pulse of the community, helping identify current public health issues and are able to answer calls intentionally, whether a primary health question or a crisis.

"Health Links – Info Santé reflects Misericordia's continuing dedication to responsiveness and innovation," added DeKeyster. "The program's ability to adapt, be flexible and specialize – especially during public health crises such as a pandemic or an Mpox outbreak – is what sets it apart."

"Health Links – Info Santé is an essential part of our health-care system," said Mike Nader, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority President and Chief Executive Officer. "The dedicated staff of this service offer critical health guidance, often helping people avoid unnecessary visits to our busy emergency departments. This milestone for Health Links – Info Santé is truly significant and I want to extend my gratitude and congratulations to all the staff who, over the years, have provided care to so many Manitobans."

WHAT: Health Links – Info Sante's 30th Anniversary

WHEN: 1:30 p.m. November 5, 2024

WHERE: Misericordia Health Centre, Provincial Health Contact Centre, 99 Cornish Avenue, 4th Floor Wolseley Building (go to elevator D and ask security to scan you in)

Health Links – Info Santé, is a bilingual phone-based program within MHC’s Provincial Health Contact Centre. Registered nurses provide assessment, triage and health-care advice to individuals of all ages calling from within Manitoba. Depending on patients’ described condition and community location nurses provide clinical guidance for patients to contact their family physician or a walk-in clinic, present to an Emergency Department or to an Urgent Care Centre as well as advice on self-care treatments at home. If an ambulance is required, nurses transfer directly to 911 and stay on the call to ensure the patient and 911 are connected.

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What is Health Links – Info Santé?

If Manitobans have a health question, Health Links – Info Santé nurses are a phone call away.

Health Links – Info Santé is a bilingual provincial service offering nursing clinical assessment, care advice as well as health-care navigation 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year with translation in more than 200 languages.

Top 10 reasons Manitobans call Health Links – Info Santé:

1. Abdominal Pain / Discomfort
2. Chest Pain / Discomfort
3. Post-operative Concerns
4. Flu-like Symptoms
5. Pediatric Fever
6. Pediatric Cough
7. Headache
8. Back Symptoms
9. GI Bleed
10. Diarrhea / Change in Bowel Habits

Health Links – Info Santé history:

In 1994 Misericordia nurses had a vision of Manitobans being able to pick up the phone to call a nurse and MHC launched Health Links – Info Santé - the first telephone nurse-based triage system in Canada. The program began with one nurse and has expanded to more than 60 nurses today.

Health Links – Info Santé has been at the forefront of numerous health responses supporting Manitoba. From individual patient-centered care to global pandemics, Health Links – Info Santé nurses provide timely, safe and compassionate care 24/7.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, Health Links – Info Santé vastly expanded its services by supporting clinical-care needs, collaborating with public health and system navigation directly related to the crisis. Calls skyrocketed from 350 calls a day to more than 7,000 at the height of the pandemic.

Health Links – Info Santé: by the numbers

Unfortunately MHC does not have statistics from 1994 and 1995, the first two years of Health Links – Info Santé's service.

- In **1996**, the number of Health Links – Info Santé calls was **29,056**.
- From **2020-2023**, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Health Links – Info Santé calls topped **one million**.
- In **2024** Health Links – Info Santé is on track to respond to more than 115,000 calls.