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## Memorandum

**FROM:** Mira Backo-Shannon  
**DATE:** December 18/2018  
**SUBJECT:** Holiday Surge

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Dear Colleagues,

Primary Care plays a significant role in improving health system access, especially during the holiday surge. The holiday season this year will be exceptionally hard on the health service providers as our hospitals are experiencing unprecedented ongoing capacity pressures; there remains human resources shortages in home care; and continuation of increasing demand with acute decompensation of chronic issues, particularly with respiratory infection season here. As health care providers, we want to ensure patients have access to the right care, when they need it over the holiday period, avoiding the Emergency Department and walk-in clinics where possible.

Reducing stress by better managing workload for ourselves and our colleagues, will allow us all to have some much needed rest time with family and friends over the holidays. Here are some tips to help you achieve these goals.

### Scheduling

- Keep one-half to one-third of your bookings unscheduled each day, until the morning of, to allow space for same day needs
- Avoid booking longer routine visits, such as periodic health exams, that could wait until after the holidays
- Post your holidays hours clearly in the waiting area and on your website so patients can plan ahead
- Leave detailed messages of holidays hours on your phone system, directing patients to clinics with whom you have arranged after hours and holiday coverage if you are not available

Patient Tips

- Renew prescriptions before the holidays
- Advise patients of the allowance of pharmacies to extend chronic disease medications for a short period of time without a physician prescription
- Get the flu shot

Follow up plans

- Advise patients on the expected recovery of their acute illness and what to do if they are not feeling better in a few days
- Trying a particular over the counter routine
- Return to your office for re-assessment
- Call your office to discuss their concern with an NP/MD
- Call Telehealth 1-866-797-0000
- Visit the physician with whom you have arranged shared holiday coverage

Following these strategies can help alleviate the capacity pressures in our health system, and assist everybody in having a stress reduced holiday season.

Have a safe and restful holiday season.

Dr. Mira Backo-Shannon  
VP Clinical Mississauga Halton LHIN