



NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE

Norovirus outbreak – Visitor and volunteer restrictions in place on 2A medical/surgical unit

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Monday, January 20, 2020 - A cluster of norovirus cases has been identified on NHH's 2A medical/surgical unit. Cases have been identified among both patients and staff.

Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is working closely with the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit to restrict further spread of this highly contagious virus and to communicate information. The following control measures have been put in place to manage the situation and prevent transmission:

- **Contact precautions** – All identified patients are on contact precautions (isolation). Isolated patients must remain in their room except when medically indicated procedures are required. Appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) is required.
- **No new admissions to the affected unit** – 2A is not accepting new admissions and will postpone patient transfers to and from other units for the time being.
- **Strict enforcement of proper hand hygiene using soap and water** – Scrupulous hand hygiene is one of the most important infection prevention and control practices to stop transmission of gastrointestinal illness and other infectious diseases. Unfortunately, hand sanitizer is not effective against Norovirus. Thorough hand washing (15 seconds, minimum) with soap and water is required.
- **Visitor restrictions to 2A** – Visitor restrictions have been put into place for 2A patients for the time being, with special exceptions evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Visiting is not currently impacted to other parts of the hospital.
- **Temporary suspension of volunteer activities on 2A** – To minimize the risk of spreading, all volunteering activities on 2A have been temporarily suspended.
- **Enhanced environmental cleaning** – Increased cleaning of the unit and increased cleaning of equipment shared between patient rooms has been implemented.
- **Monitoring** – any patient who develops new on-set of any of the following symptoms (nausea, diarrhea and vomiting) will be placed on contact precautions.
- **Proactive communication** – Public notices are being placed on all appropriate hospital entrances as well as to the doorways within/leading to 2A to promote awareness, with reminders regarding hand hygiene requirements. A

Backgrounder detailing Visitor Tips for Minimizing the Spread of Infections is available here on www.nhh.ca

NHH remains fully operational, with programs and services across the hospital operating as normal. Please be diligent in practicing appropriate hand hygiene and infection prevention and control practices when visiting the hospital at any time. Frequent hand washing, particularly before and after patient contact, is mandatory and vital to reducing health care associated infections.

Updates will be provided as required. Further information on norovirus is provided below.

Fast facts on norovirus:

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is the term given to a group of viruses that cause gastroenteritis—an illness that usually includes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Noroviruses are commonly found throughout North America and cases tend to be more common at this time of year. They reside in the stool or vomit of infected people. The viruses are very contagious and can spread easily from person to person. The Public Health Agency of Canada reports that people can become infected with the virus in several ways, including: through direct contact with another person who is infected (for example, caring for or diapering an ill child, sharing food or eating utensils with an ill person); touching surfaces or objects contaminated with a norovirus (such as door handles); and eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated.¹

How long do symptoms last?

People exposed to the virus usually develop symptoms of illness within 24 to 48 hours, but symptoms can occur as quickly as 12 hours after exposure. People infected with a norovirus can be contagious from the moment they start feeling ill to at least three days after they have recovered.

Diagnosis and treatment?

A norovirus is diagnosed through a laboratory test on the stool of an infected person. There is no vaccine or antiviral medication to prevent getting sick with a norovirus and antibiotics are not effective in treating the illness. Healthy people normally recover within one or two days, and symptoms resolve on their own. To prevent dehydration, fluid intake should be increased.

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About Northumberland Hills Hospital – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, obstetrical care and palliative care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care and rehabilitation. Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west

Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of Ontario Health (East) – formerly the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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