



NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seven steps for a healthy holiday season

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Wednesday, November 28, 2018—The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit has recently confirmed the arrival of the first local influenza case in the region. As we head into the busy holiday season, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is sharing its annual reminder to plan ahead, where possible, to help keep limited local health care services accessible for those who need them the most.

By planning ahead, and making use of alternative resources for non-emergency situations, we can minimize the seasonal strain on our local Emergency Department (ED), which typically sees patient volumes increase further between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve with the holiday closure of many primary care offices.

Below are seven steps we can all take in the next few weeks to help ensure a healthy holiday season. NHH extends best wishes to all for a safe, happy and healthy holiday season.

1) Influenza vaccination – Get your flu shot, not the flu

Influenza typically begins to circulate in mid- to late-November, and the local Health Unit is confirming that we are seeing the same pattern in 2018. Don't let the flu take the fun out of your holiday celebrations. Recommended for those six months of age and older, you can protect yourself, your family and your community with the influenza vaccination. Available now from family physician offices, community health centres, walk-in clinics and pharmacies, the flu vaccination is your best line of defense against a potentially dangerous virus. For a full list of pharmacies offering flu vaccination clinics in the area, as well as a useful question and answer sheet on the vaccine, see the [local Health Unit's website](#).

2) Wash your hands – often!

Germs live on surfaces. Reduce your risk of picking up unwanted germs by washing your hands, often, especially when you are out in public. Regular, proper hand hygiene is the single most effective step you can take to stop the spread of seasonal viruses.

3) Eat well, and get a good balance of rest and exercise

We can help to keep our immune systems strong by powering up with a healthy diet, plenty of rest and regular exercise. Resources on healthy eating, including links to Canada's food guides, will be found on the [local Health Unit's website](#).

4) Sneeze and cough into your sleeve (not your hands)

Minimize the risk of spreading germs to the surfaces you touch by sneezing and coughing into your sleeve.

5) Stay home from work, school and public events if you are sick

Sometimes, the best medicine is rest and, when you're sick, staying home to get some rest is another good way of minimizing the spread of the germs you may be carrying. Influenza spreads from person to person, through a handshake or a cough, and can be unknowingly transmitted to

others, particularly those who may be more vulnerable, such as older adults, very young children and those whose immune systems have been compromised by another illness.

6) Make note of your doctor or nurse practitioner's holiday hours and—where possible—plan ahead

Local primary care offices will have special hours of operation over the holiday. Now is the time to check to see when your doctor or nurse practitioner will be available and to confirm your family's prescriptions are up-to-date, in advance of any closure, so you can minimize non-urgent trips to the ED.

7) Consider Emergency Department alternatives

NHH's Emergency Department is always ready when you need it, but the team does advise that you consider area primary care offices or community clinics for non-emergency health concerns. Many local family physicians now operate after-hour clinics, accessible to their patients only. Check to see if your family physician has an after-hour service in place. If your situation is non-urgent, and your family physician isn't available, you can also:

- Get free telephone access to a Registered Nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through the **Telehealth Ontario** service at 1-866-797-0000 (TTY 1-866-797-0007).
- Visit the **Port Hope Walk-In Clinic** at 99 Toronto Road, Port Hope (2nd floor). The Clinic (905-885-0611) will be open every day over the holidays, including December 24th, from 10AM to 4PM on weekends, and 11AM to 5PM on weekdays (at the discretion of the physician working each day) with the exception of December 25th, 26th and January 1st, when the clinic will be closed.
- Visit the **Central East Local Health Integration Network's HealthLine website** at <http://www.centraleasthealthline.ca/> for a detailed listing of health and community services across our region.

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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 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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