



# NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

## **Backgrounder - Visitor Tips for Minimizing the Spread of Infection**

Visitors to health-care facilities play a very important role in protecting patient safety and minimizing the spread of infection.

A good summary of visitor tips, published by the US-based Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology ([www.apic.org](http://www.apic.org)), is provided below. **Hand washing remains the single most effective means of reducing the spread of infection both within the hospital and in the community.**

### ***Sanitize hands before and after visiting***

*Wash or sanitize your hands when entering and leaving the room of the person you are visiting to avoid bringing in and carrying out germs. Insist that health-care providers do the same before caring for your loved one. Clean your hands after sneezing, coughing, touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, after using the restroom and before and after eating and drinking. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your sleeve, and do not sit on patient beds or handle their equipment. Read and follow any instructions posted outside the patient's room.*

### ***Refrain from visiting a patient if you are sick***

*Do not visit the hospital if you are sick or have had any ill symptoms within the last three days including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever (or feeling feverish), uncontrolled cough or rash.*

### ***Check first before you bring food, send flowers or take the kids***

*While flowers, young visitors and home-baked goodies spread cheer, they may not be allowed, so check with the nurse first. Most hospitals prohibit flowers in intensive care units. If you change the water in a vase of flowers, be sure to wash your hands afterward. Bringing food is risky because the patient may be on a special diet or the food could spoil and make the patient sick. Likewise, check with the health-care facility about the rules for children visiting. If you bring youngsters, don't let them play on the floor or bed and have them wash their hands as they enter and leave the room. Make sure the child is free from symptoms of infection (e.g., runny nose, sore throat, rash, cough, etc.)*

### ***Special precautions***

*If the person you are visiting is on "Isolation Precautions," talk to the nurse before entering the room to find out what steps you will have to take, such as wearing a mask or other protective clothing. Also ask for any educational materials that may be available.*

***Don't contribute to the clutter***

*Limit the patient's personal items. Less clutter eases the critical job of cleaning hospital rooms. Keep patient items off the floor and away from waste containers.*

*Visiting more than one If you are visiting multiple patients (for instance, if you are a pastor), sanitize your hands before and after seeing each patient. Do not share the communion cup and lay the wafer on a paper towel (not directly on the patient's table.)*

*Visit the person in isolation last and follow the precautions specified.*

***Back at home***

*Keep the patient healthy back at home. Follow discharge instructions and eliminate germs from the patient's environment by using disinfectants, such as sprays and wipes, to clean hard surfaces often.*

For more information contact Jennifer Gillard at 905-377-7757 or [jgillard@nhh.ca](mailto:jgillard@nhh.ca).

**About Northumberland Hills Hospital** – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, and obstetrical care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care, rehabilitation and palliative care. 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](http://www.nhh.ca).