



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

Area residents overdue for breast cancer screening encouraged to be tested

*Safe in-person cancer screening available from Clay and Elaine Elliott
Women's Health Centre at NHH*

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Tuesday, October 5, 2021 – October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the Central East Regional Cancer Program, Ontario Health and local hospital partners are encouraging [eligible](#) Ontarians ages 50 to 74 years old to talk to their family doctor or nurse practitioner about getting checked for breast cancer or contact their local [Ontario Breast Screening Program](#) partner to book directly.

Every year, approximately 12,000 Ontario women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and approximately 2,000 will die from it. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Ontario women, but more people in Ontario survive breast cancer today than almost every other cancer. Regular screening is important because it can find breast cancer early when treatment has a better chance of working.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many non-urgent health care procedures in Ontario, including cancer screening, were paused or deferred to prioritize urgent health care needs and reduce the spread of COVID-19. While screening has resumed, some patients have been challenged to, or reluctant to, access routine medical care and screening.

Findings from an [Ontario study](#) indicate that in 2020 there was about a 41 per cent drop in cancer screening tests compared to 2019 pre-pandemic levels. While screening for breast, cervical, colorectal and lung cancers in 2021 remains 11 to 22 per cent below 2019 levels, volumes are beginning to increase as people return to get screened. For example, in June 2021, monthly breast screening tests in Ontario were approximately 9 per cent above June 2019 levels.

“We have all taken tremendous measures to stay safe and healthy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic including staying home, but getting checked for breast cancer is still important,” said Dr. Linda Rabeneck, Vice-President, Prevention and Cancer Control at Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario). “Health care providers and hospitals in Ontario have strict infection control measures in place so people who need to can visit these sites in person. I encourage you to speak with your family doctor or nurse practitioner if you are overdue for a mammogram.”

“It’s safe to screen. Getting checked regularly with mammography is important,” said Dr. Rola Shaheen, Regional Breast and Cancer Imaging Lead. “Mammograms can find breast cancer early when it may be smaller and less likely to have spread to other parts of the body. Treatment may also have a better chance of working when breast cancer is found early.”

The Central East Regional Cancer Program, in partnership with Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario), checks two different groups of people in Ontario for breast cancer: those at average risk and those at high risk. The [Ontario Breast Screening Program \(OBSP\)](#) recommends that:

- Most people ages 50 to 74 who are eligible for the OBSP get checked every two years with a mammogram.
- People ages 30 to 69 who meet the [High Risk OBSP eligibility criteria](#) get checked once a year with both a mammogram and breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) (or screening breast ultrasound if MRI is not medically appropriate).
- People ages 70 to 74 who are already in the High Risk OBSP get checked once a year with a mammogram through the program.

“Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) offers a full service for diagnostic breast screening and we are fully operational,” says Ian Moffat, Director of NHH’s Diagnostic Imaging Program. “We are a registered OBSP Centre, accredited by the Canadian Association of Radiologists. If you or someone you love is due for your routine screening, please do not delay. NHH’s fully digital mammography units, generously supported by local donors, are here to serve you together with our excellent team of radiologists, Medical Radiation Technologists and more.”

Talk to your family doctor or nurse practitioner about your breast health and screening test options. If you live in a First Nation community, visit your nursing station or health centre for more information.

Important research is being undertaken to better understand breast cancer risk and deliver more personalized screening tests for Ontarians. Learn more about the study and who you may participate here: www.cancercareontario.ca/perspective.

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 more than 700 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) or Facebook [@northumberlandhillshosp](https://facebook.com/northumberlandhillshosp)

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