

The latest on our efforts against COVID-19

Non-urgent service volumes at or close to pre-pandemic levels, limited in-person visiting reinstated on weekends/holidays with virtual options to be sustained for foreseeable future

Services returning to pre-pandemic levels

The Service Continuity and Planning Working Group continues to gradually return Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) to pre-pandemic service levels for the majority of non-urgent surgeries, procedures and tests while also balancing the new requirements of COVID-19.

Surgical services are now at 90% of pre-COVID-19 activity at NHH (with colonoscopies, cataracts, hernia repairs and selected gynecological procedures all resumed). Diagnostic imaging procedures are now at 75% of pre-COVID-19 activity, including CT exams, MRIs, ultrasounds, x-ray, mammography, nuclear medicine and interventional radiology procedures, like joint injections and pain management and, most recently, bone mineral densitometry and interventional radiology. In-person ambulatory care clinic appointments have resumed where alternate virtual options are not available and in-person community mental health appointments through the Walk-In Counselling Clinic at 1011 Elgin Street West, Cobourg, are continuing to be increased alongside the virtual counselling service initiated when the pandemic was announced.

"With Ontario now in Stage 3 of its reopening framework, we are, effectively, 'open' as a province," said Linda Davis, President and CEO. Schools are set to resume in September, visitors are coming into and through the community, and more and more interaction with people outside our immediate households is occurring. Now is the time to be even more vigilant about following public health advice."

Public health officials are urging everyone to help minimize the risk of the spread of COVID-19 by continuing to:

- Maintain physical distance from others (6 feet or 2 metres).
- Wear a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge, not possible or required.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Download COVID Alert, the new made-in-Ontario app that alerts users if they may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

"While many provincial restrictions have been relaxed, and we are all pleased to be moving forward into a 'new normal' state, NHH is closely monitoring the slow but continued rise in confirmed cases in our region," said Davis. "A total of 31 individuals from Northumberland have now been confirmed positive for COVID-19. This is an increase of seven cases in the last five weeks alone as of August 25th. Public health and workplace safety measures and restrictions, including physical distancing, must continue to be observed."

COVID-19 visitor policy and family presence practices remain in effect, virtual visiting program to continue

The temporary COVID-19 Visitor Policy and family presence practices are expected to continue in their current form for at least two more weeks at NHH. Restrictions introduced at the outset of the pandemic were partially relaxed on July 25th. NHH's current COVID-19 **Visitor Policy** permits in-person inpatient unit visits for one designated visitor or primary family caregiver identified in advance between 1PM and 5PM on weekends and holidays. Essential family caregivers/visitors continue to be permitted, namely visitors to a patient that is dying or very ill; a support for a delivering mother, and; a parent/guardian of a child or primary family caregiver for an individual with special needs.

"We appreciate the importance of family and visitor presence to patients and families alike. We encourage those with loved ones admitted to an inpatient unit at NHH to familiarize themselves with the information available on our website, and speak with the care team about the visitor restrictions in place, and the options applicable to them, including virtual visiting. The team will work to the best of their ability to accommodate patient needs while also minimizing the total number of individuals within the hospital at any one time," said Davis.

Virtual visits may be scheduled weekdays by contacting the hospital's Virtual Visiting Team at 905-372-6811 ext. 3146 or by email to virtualconnections@nhh.ca. Wherever possible, NHH encourages families and friends to take advantage of this virtual service, which has been enabled by generous community donations of iPads coordinated through our NHH Foundation, and continues to receive very positive feedback from the 200+ families that have taken advantage of it to date.

Accessing COVID-19 testing

Open daily, 8AM to 4PM, and accessible through the Emergency Department entrance at NHH, the hospital's COVID-19 Assessment Centre has, to date, conducted over 10,000 COVID-19 tests, inclusive of inpatient and outpatient (Assessment Centre) efforts. "Less than one per cent of those we tested have tested positive," confirmed Davis, "We are proud to be part of this critical component of COVID-19 management and we are committed to continuing, with our community partners, to serve our community's testing needs moving forward."

While walk-ins are accepted at the NHH COVID-19 Assessment Centre, NHH strongly recommends calling ahead to the Centre (**905-377-7783**) to schedule an assessment. This helps the team minimize wait times for all who need this service, and supports physical distancing requirements within the Assessment Centre waiting space. As always, if symptoms are severe, call 911 and alert the dispatcher to the potential concern regarding COVID-19 so they can be appropriately prepared.

Regional collaboration

As fall approaches, and the potential for the coming together of both a second wave of the pandemic and the usual regular flu season, NHH is actively planning at both the local and regional level. Locally, this includes collaboration among the **Ontario Health Team of Northumberland** partnership to increase local options for surveillance and COVID-19 testing services and the continuation of connections established in wave 1 between the Northumberland County hospitals, primary care, public health and paramedic partners as well as local long-term care, retirement home and other congregate living arrangements. Also included is planning with our regional acute care hospital partners to share information and proactively plan for critical care capacity and other common priorities with the support of Ontario Health, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

For the latest hospital news on COVID-19, and links to useful local, regional and provincial resources, please see our NHH website: nhh.ca/covid-19

The COVID Alert app lets you know if you may have been exposed to COVID-19.



Download the app to protect yourself and your community.

The **COVID Alert app** lets you know if you may have been exposed to the virus. You can then get tested and keep you and your community safe. The app is voluntary. The more people who choose to use it, the more effective we will be at stopping the spread of COVID-19. Protect yourself. Protect others.

Available in the Apple or Google app stores.

COVID Alert is:

- **Free.**
- **Easy to use.** Install it and stay safe on your daily journey.
- **Safe and private.** It never collects your health information, location, or identity.

For more information, visit Ontario.ca/covidalert