

Working together to ensure access to emergency care during the holiday season

The arrival of flu season and the annual holiday closure of many local primary care offices means NHH's Emergency Department (ED) will be busier than usual, especially between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

By planning ahead, and making use of alternative resources for non-emergency situations, we can minimize the seasonal strain on our local ED and help to keep the service accessible for those who need it the most. Below are a few steps we can all take to have a healthy holiday season.

Influenza vaccination – Get your flu shot, not the flu

Don't let the flu take the fun out of your holiday season. Protect yourself, your family and your community with a flu vaccination. Available from most 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.

Wash your hands – often!

Minimize 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.

Make note of your doctor's holiday hours and—where possible—plan ahead

Many local family physician (primary care) offices will have special hours of operation over the holiday. Now is the time to check to see when your doctor's office will be open 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.

Consider Emergency Department alternatives

NHH's Emergency Department is always ready when you need it, but the team does advise that you consider family doctors or community clinics for non-emergency health concerns. In the past year, a number of local family physicians have introduced NEW 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 249 Ontario Street, Port Hope. The Clinic (905-885-0611) will be open every day over the holidays, including December 24th, from 10AM to 4PM (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.
- Check the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care **Your Health Care Options** website at www.ontario.ca/locations/health for information on the various health-care services in your area.

Northumberland Hills Hospital extends best wishes to all for a safe, happy and healthy holiday season.

What is the flu?

Influenza is an acute respiratory illness caused by a virus. Symptoms include fever, cough, weakness, body aches and headache. Influenza can lead to pneumonia.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has developed a website with flu facts. Available at www.ontario.ca/page/get-flu-shot it's a great resource for anyone looking for information on how to treat the flu at home, and when to seek medical help.

NHH invites community to participate in strategic planning process through print and on-line surveys

Input (due January 6) will be added to feedback gathered in recent community conversations

Since November, 2016, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) has been hosting conversations with internal and external stakeholders as well as community partners to help identify the strategic priorities that will guide it over the next four to five years.

Titled *Creating our Future Together*, the goal of the collaborative strategic planning process is to develop the roadmap that will guide NHH into the 2020s—through updated mission, vision, values and strategic priorities—while continuously building stronger local hospital services for the patients served.

Representatives from MacPhie, the agency supporting NHH in the process, have been working with the hospital facilitating face-to-face and telephone conversations. "As of mid-December, we've heard from over 200 stakeholders, including staff, physicians, volunteers, community members and partners," said Linda Davis, NHH's President and CEO. "The input has been extremely thoughtful and helpful. We thank all who have taken the time to participate and we look forward to hearing from many more this month."

As promised, NHH has broadened its conversations with the launch of a survey. Available now in both print and electronic (web) versions, the survey will be open for input through the holiday season to Friday, January 6th, 2017.

Find a link to the electronic version of the public survey on the hospital's website at www.nhh.ca. Hard copy versions of the same survey are available for pick-up at the hospital's main entrance (Inquiry Desk) as well as the Port Hope Northumberland Community Health Centre or Northumberland Family Health Team offices. All hard copy surveys include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for their return.

Questions? Please visit www.nhh.ca or contact Jennifer Gillard, Director, Communications and Community Engagement, at 905-377-7757 or jgillard@nhh.ca.