

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

Influenza season has arrived in Northumberland and, coupled with the annual holiday closure of many local primary care offices, we're expecting to be even busier than usual in the Northumberland Hills Hospital's Emergency Department (ED), especially between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, which fall on Sunday this year.

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 help ensure 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 celebrations. 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.

### Wash your hands – often!

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.

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

Many 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.

### 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. A number of 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 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor). The Clinic (905-885-0611) will be open every day over the holidays, including December 24<sup>th</sup>, from 10AM to 4PM (at the discretion of the physician working each day) with the exception of December 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup>, when the clinic will be closed. NOTE: beginning Friday, January 2, the Port Hope Walk-In Clinic will be temporarily closed on Fridays. It will continue to operate as usual the other 6 days per week.
- Visit the Central East Local Health Integration Network's Healthline website at [www.centraleasthealthline.ca](http://www.centraleasthealthline.ca) for a detailed listing of health and community services across our region.

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

### What is the Central East Healthline?

A handy one-stop shop for information on health and community services across our region, Healthline is an online resource managed by the Central East Local Health Integration Network.

Visit it at [www.centraleasthealthline.ca](http://www.centraleasthealthline.ca) if you have questions about health care options in our area, specific health topics or if you're looking for information on upcoming events in our region to support healthy living.

### Call for Interest – NHH Patient and Family Advisory Council

If you or your family member has been a patient at NHH in the past three years, and you're over the age of 18, the hospital would like you to consider joining its **Patient and Family Advisory Council**.

Now with seven volunteers and two supporting staff members, the Council is providing input to hospital staff, managers, physicians and the Board on a variety of hospital activities, projects and committees.

Specific opportunities currently exist for Patient and Family Advisors with experience in and an interest in enhancing NHH services in two key areas:

- Emergency care (one opportunity) and
- Maternal/Child care (two opportunities).

The Emergency care and one of the two Maternal/Child care opportunities will fill existing seats on the hospital's inaugural Patient and Family Advisory Council. Candidates with direct experience either as a patient and/or the family member or caregiver to a patient who received care in these areas at NHH are invited to consider applying.

A second, new Maternal/Child care opportunity is also available. Project specific, the successful candidate for this opportunity will help support the local development of Ontario's inter-organizational "Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) Strategy," an initiative to enhance breastfeeding across Ontario. Local women with recent breastfeeding experience (positive or negative), or local women expecting a baby in the near future and an interest in breastfeeding, are invited to consider applying to be part of the development of the BFI at NHH. When fully implemented, BFI will provide hospitals and community health organizations with training, tools, guidance, and educational resources to help achieve the World Health Organization's BFI designation and adopt best practices that meet BFI requirements.

Interest from prospective patient and family advisors with experience in other areas of the hospital's services, beyond the current Emergency care and Maternal/Child Care openings, will also be considered for future opportunities.

For details, including an Expression of Interest form, please see the related news release on [nhh.ca](http://nhh.ca). If you do not have Internet access, and would like to receive an Expression of Interest form in the mail, please call the NHH Administration office at 905-372-6811, ext. 4004.

Completed expressions of interest are requested by **January 5th, 2018** for consideration in the specific opportunities now available.