

The latest on our efforts against COVID-19

Thank you, Northumberland County!

The support shown to Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been outstanding. Today's *Northumberland News* features two pages of personal messages of thanks from members of our team. Pandemic or otherwise, your hospital will continue to be here when you need it, and we are grateful for all the ways you've shown us that you are here for NHH too. We are stronger together.

Expanded access to COVID-19 testing in Ontario

The Chief Medical Officer of Health has recently issued expanded guidance on Ontario's testing strategy. Testing is now available for:

- All those with at least one symptom of COVID-19, even if mild
- Asymptomatic people who think they may have been exposed to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19
- Asymptomatic people who may be at risk of exposure to COVID-19 through their employment

NHH's COVID-19 Assessment Centre is open daily from 8 AM to 4 PM. Call the Centre directly at 905-377-7783 to book an appointment or if you have questions. Walk-ins are welcome, but to shorten your wait, it is recommended that you call ahead and schedule a visit. For the most recent list of symptoms, see the link to the Ministry of Health Reference Document in the COVID-19 area of our website, nhh.ca/covid-19.

Virtual Visiting Program at NHH

With COVID-19 restrictions in place, many have had to find creative ways to connect with each other. This is true not only across the community, but within the inpatient units at NHH as well, where a Virtual Visiting Program has been successfully trialed and, last week, expanded throughout the hospital to help patients and their families connect with their loved ones while still sticking to the necessary visitor restrictions that remain in place at hospitals throughout Ontario.



NHH's Virtual Visiting program uses iPads and the Microsoft Teams platform to support non-clinical, social video calls between patients and their family and friends. Thanks to the generosity of local donors, what started as an ad hoc effort is now available to all inpatients thanks to the donation of additional, dedicated iPads to allow for more of these virtual visits to take place.

Virtual visiting appointments can be requested by either patients or by their family members or friends Monday through Friday. Phone appointments are also available. Interested in arranging a Virtual Visiting appointment with a loved one admitted to NHH? Please contact NHH's Virtual Visiting Team directly at 905-372-6811 ext. 3146 or send an email to virtualconnections@nhh.ca. For more information, please see the related media release at: nhh.ca

Explore the impact of the pandemic on the body and mind with a Virtual PACE Talk

A special edition of the Northumberland PACE speakers' series will be offered this month with a virtual event exploring *The Impact of the Pandemic on the Body and Mind*. The first virtual PACE conversation will take place through Zoom on **Wednesday, June 17 at 5:30 PM** with guest speakers Dr. Mukesh Bhargava and Dr. Jackie Gardner-Nix. Pre-registration is required and spots are limited. Get details and register at pacetalks.com.

Non-urgent surgeries, procedures and tests to begin resuming at region's hospitals, including NHH

NHH is among five regional hospital partners (including Campbellford Memorial Hospital, Haliburton Highlands Health Services, Peterborough Regional Health Centre and Ross Memorial Hospital) approved to move forward with a regional plan to begin resuming non-urgent surgeries, procedures and tests.

On March 19, under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, the government of Ontario directed all acute care hospitals to ramp down elective surgeries and non-urgent activities in order to preserve system capacity to deal effectively with COVID-19.

Beginning this month, non-urgent care at each of the five hospitals will now be resumed in a gradual, phased manner. It will be necessary to prioritize the most urgent patient needs and, at times, each hospital may need to scale back on non-urgent care volumes again should COVID-19 activity in the region fluctuate.

"We recognize the impact the pandemic has had on patients waiting for elective procedures, and we thank everyone for their continued understanding, patience and support as we work through these unprecedented times," said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO. "We are very pleased to now meet the conditions established by the province to begin resuming elective care at NHH. It is essential, however, that we do this gradually, using a measured and staged approach, while maintaining the flexibility to reduce services as quickly as possible should we need to support a sudden increase of COVID-19 cases in our community." The NHH team is working now on the plan and expects—barring any changes in local circumstances—to be in a position to begin to introduce a small number of elective surgical procedures in the second week of June.

"COVID-19 has not gone away. We must remain vigilant in our steps to minimize risk and spread while at the same time returning to what will be a new normal," said Davis. "Our team will monitor any change in local COVID-19 cases, as well as the capacity of our community partners, such as home and community care, and continue with virtual service offerings where appropriate until all elective NHH services can be brought back to their full capacity. These details will follow as plans and dates are finalized."

OHT of Northumberland calling on community volunteers to produce cloth masks



With COVID-19 restrictions beginning to lift in Ontario, and federal and provincial public health authorities now recommending cloth face coverings for all as an additional means of minimizing the spread of infection when physical distancing is not possible, local Ontario Health Team of Northumberland partners are reaching out to area volunteers to help them ensure their patients and clients have a ready supply.

In addition to helping to minimize the community spread of COVID-19 in Northumberland, the group hopes to preserve precious medical grade personal protective equipment (PPE) for those delivering direct health and social care in the region by helping to get cloth mask alternatives into the hands of all OHT-N patients and clients.

Find details on the OHT-N's call for masks, download sewing instructions and find information on how to put on, remove and clean a cloth mask in the News section of the OHT-N website, ohtnorthumberland.ca

Stay up-to-date

17 confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Northumberland County since the beginning of the pandemic. All but one of these are considered resolved. Local cases are reported daily by the HKPR Health Unit here: hkpr.on.ca.

For the latest COVID-19 information specific to NHH, and links to other information sources, see our website: nhh.ca/covid-19. Questions? Email us care of: info@nhh.ca or call our Public Affairs office at 905-377-7757.