

Though risk in Ontario remains low, steps are being taken at provincial and local level to stay ahead of COVID-19

While the risk of becoming ill from COVID-19 continues to be low in Ontario, NHH, the local Health Unit and community health partners are working together in Northumberland to ensure they are prepared should a case develop locally.

"There have been a number of improvements made in the way we prepare for wide-spread illnesses since we experienced SARS," said Dr. Noseworthy, Medical Officer of Health for the HKPR District Health Unit, in a March 2nd media release issued with area partners. "Across the province we have seen improvements in communication about the illness and cases, improved laboratory testing protocols and quicker test results shared with health professionals for the stringent contact follow-up and management involving potential cases. The bottom line is that we are prepared for if, and when, we may see a case locally." Also on March 2nd, Ontario's Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliott announced that the province is implementing an enhanced response structure for COVID-19 to further guide efforts and provide centralized resources.

At NHH a broad range of proactive steps have been taken to prepare for COVID-19. "Passive and active screening measures are in place in the Emergency Department (ED) and across our health services to help identify any suspect patients with COVID-19, support the necessary infection prevention and control actions, and ensure appropriate reporting to public health," said Linda Davis, President and CEO. "In the ED, for example, all patients are screened at triage for symptoms of respiratory infection and those with these symptoms are further being screened for:

- travel history to an impacted area OR
- close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 OR
- close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to an impacted area.

To date, no cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed at NHH. "Our Infection Prevention and Control and Leadership teams are meeting regularly to monitor the local situation, review the updates coming to us from provincial and global officials and prepare," said Davis. "We have the people and processes in place to manage this in Ontario and we are doing just that."

Steps you can take to minimize the risk of catching a virus or passing one on:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze with a tissue, then wash your hands.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or arm.
- Stay home if you or a family member are ill.
- Get your flu shot to protect you from the flu.
- Avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care homes if you are sick.

Steps to take if you have respiratory illness symptoms

If you are ill and must visit a hospital ED, clinic or other healthcare provider, call ahead or tell them right away when you arrive that you have a respiratory illness and wear a mask while waiting to be seen. This allows health care providers to take steps to reduce the potential spread of illness.

Be prepared to identify your travel history and/or potential contact history with COVID-19 so that paramedics and/or the health care provider are appropriately prepared to assist you.

- Call your local health unit or health care provider if you become sick with a cough and/or fever AND have returned from an affected area in the past 14 days or have had close contact with an ill person who is either under investigation for COVID-19 or is a confirmed case. Call the Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577, ext. 5020, or visit www.hkpr.on.ca. After hours, people can call Telehealth Ontario for medical advice toll-free at 1-866-797-0000.
- If you have severe respiratory symptoms, call 911 and explain both your travel history and symptoms to arrange swift and safe transport.

Guidance for travellers

Consult your health care provider as soon as possible if you have concerns about your symptoms or have a travel history to a region where COVID-19 is occurring or if you have had close contact with an ill person who is either under investigation for COVID-19 or is a confirmed case. Ontario residents are advised to monitor and follow Canadian Travel Advisories as well as alerts and advisories in the travel destination and act accordingly. Specific requirements are in place in Ontario for those with travel to some affected areas to support rapid identification and case management. Information is being updated regularly. For the latest guidance on self-isolation, self-monitoring and reporting of symptoms after travel to an affected area, consult the travel health advice from the Public Health Agency of Canada website: www.canada.ca/en/public-health

Get the facts - COVID-19 resources

Please rely on credible sources of information about COVID-19, including daily updates at:

- The Ontario Ministry of Health website (www.ontario.ca/coronavirus)
- Public Health Agency of Canada website (www.canada.ca/coronavirus)

Ear, Nose and Throat Services Expanding at NHH

The recent recruitment of a new physician to NHH will mean an increase in access close to home for patients needing ear, nose, or throat (ENT) related surgeries. Dr. Gabriel Fuoco, a specialist in Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery, began operating last month with the Surgical Services department. He will perform day surgeries one day a month. For details please see the full media release at www.nhh.ca



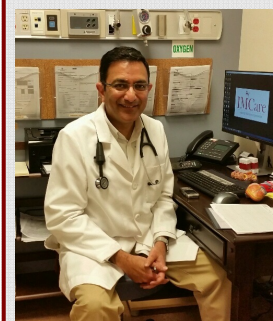
Former dialysis patient and kidney donor to host World Kidney Day event - March 12, 2020



When the results of a blood test in 2012 were delivered, Bob McKenzie learned his kidneys were not functioning properly and by 2015, he required dialysis. Now a kidney transplant recipient and Transplant Ambassador with the Ontario Renal Network, the former dialysis patient is keen to give back to the hospital and network that supported him. Mr. McKenzie will be at NHH from 10:00a.m. to 2:00p.m. on March 12, 2020 – World Kidney Day – to share his story and highlight the prevalence of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), the importance of education, and awareness around the risks of kidney disease, as well as the benefits of live organ donation.

"I was a dialysis patient at NHH for 3 years," said Mr. McKenzie. "I was fortunate to be eligible for transplant, to be matched with a donor and have success with the surgery. It's truly an honour to be part of the same hospital's Transplant Ambassador program today, and on this World Kidney Day. I look forward to sharing my story with others and, perhaps, helping other families with their own chronic kidney disease journey."

Mr. McKenzie will have an information booth set up beside the Main Street Bistro at NHH and will be proudly sporting his bright green Transplant Ambassador Program (TAP) vest. He'll be accompanied by Debbie Bennett, a living kidney donor and fellow TAP Ambassador. Blood pressure checks will also be available. For further details, please see the news release at nhh.ca.



PACE Speakers

Explore the Science of Habits at the next Northumberland PACE Talk with Dr. Mukesh Bhargava.

March 18th, 2020 - 5:30 pm, Community Health Centres of Northumberland.

Visit PACETalks.com to register for this free event.