

Prevent falls—and serious injury—by taking some simple precautions and staying active

The Ontario Medical Association has estimated that “Every 10 minutes in Ontario, at least one person over the age of 65 visits an emergency room because of a fall. Unintentional falls are the leading cause of injury among those over 65, making up 59% of emergency department visits and 79% of all hospitalizations for this age group in Ontario.”

Falls are caused by a number of factors. New health challenges like pneumonia, vision and hearing problems, or heart problems, can increase one’s risk of a fall. Other causes could be slippery floors, loose rugs, improper footwear, not using the right walking equipment, and the use of some medications.

“Even a fear of falling can cause falls,” says Gibbens. “It’s the use it or lose it principle. If someone is afraid of falling, they gradually become less likely to get up and move. In time, the leg muscles weaken quickly, making a fall more likely.”

NHH joined with their partners at Community Care Northumberland this month to issue a call to action around falls, reminding area seniors that many falls can be prevented by making small changes to their home environment and taking steps, literally, to maintain one’s mobility.

For details, including information on the free community exercise and falls prevention classes offered by Community Care Northumberland (CCN) in Colborne, Cobourg, Hastings, Port Hope and Campbellford, see the related news release at www.nhh.ca or call CCN directly at 1-866-514-5774.



“Falls can be disastrous for older adults.” says NHH’s Geriatric Emergency Medicine Nurse Sarah Gibbens. “The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that 1 in 3 seniors falls each year, and 40% of those falls result in a hip fracture.”

Coaching team selected to review financial challenges, ensure sustainability of Northumberland Hills Hospital

A third-party review of Northumberland Hills Hospital’s ongoing financial challenges is now underway following the selection of the coaching team.

Five candidates who met the criteria received the hospital’s November 7th invitational call for proposals and, of those, three submitted formal proposals.

The successful candidates are **JD & Associates** led by Janice Dusek, and supported by Norman Rees and Zenita Hirji. This three-person team brings a high level of health system funding expertise, clinical knowledge and hands-on experience working in and with medium-sized hospitals.

A Steering Committee has been formed to support the coaching process and receive the coaching team’s recommendations. On the Committee are NHH Board directors and members of the Board’s Finance and Audit Committee John Hudson and Bill Gerber, the NHH senior management team, physician representatives Dr. Mukesh Bhargava and Dr. David Broderick as well as Stewart Sutley, representing the Central East LHIN. The Committee expects to have the coaching team’s findings and recommendations in hand early in the New Year.

For the current fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015, NHH is projecting a significant operating shortfall of approximately \$1.45 million against a budget of \$65 million (approximately 2 percent). In the seven fiscal years since the LHIN assumed funding responsibility for health service providers in Ontario (2007/08), NHH has incurred four deficits and three surpluses in its operations. Balanced operating budgets are an expectation of each Ontario hospital’s service accountability agreement.

In late October, in approving NHH to initiate the review, the LHIN acknowledged NHH’s efforts in recent years to find efficiencies and maintain core services. It also recognized the pressures facing the hospital, namely demographic trends and the unique challenges of mid-sized urban/rural hospitals that serve as the single acute care hospital for their community. For further details on the coaching team process please see the related news releases on www.nhh.ca.

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

The arrival of flu season and the holiday closure of many local family physicians’ offices means Northumberland Hills Hospital’s Emergency Department (ED) will be busier than usual this month, 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.

Hand hygiene

Minimize your risk of catching a bug by washing your hands, often, especially when you are out in public. Hand hygiene is the single most effective step you can take to stop the spread of seasonal viruses.

Flu vaccination - Get the flu shot, not the flu!

Don’t let influenza take the joy out of your holiday season. Protect yourself, your family and everyone you love with a flu vaccination. It’s available from most family physician offices, community health centres, walk-in clinics and pharmacies, and it’s your best line of defense against a potentially dangerous virus.

Make note of your doctor’s holiday hours, in advance

Many local physician 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.

Alternative options to the NHH ED

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. If your family physician isn’t available, and your situation is non-urgent, you can:

- check the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care **Your Health Care Options website** at www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions for information on the various health-care services in your area
- 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**, 249 Ontario Street, Port Hope, 905-885-0611, open Monday – Friday, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Saturday-Sunday, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Note: the clinic is closed statutory holidays (Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day)