



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE

Cough, Cold and COVID Assessment Centre preparing to wind down on March 31, 2023

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, March 23, 2023—With the volume of COVID-19 cases and respiratory-focused illnesses decreasing in the community, the Cough, Cold and COVID-19 Assessment Centre at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is preparing to wind down its services, effective March 31, 2023.

The symbolism of the closure is not lost on the large team of NHH staff, physicians and Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) partners who came together just over three years ago to open the service. The final day of operation, when it comes later this month, marks a turning point in the local response to COVID-19 and an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the collaborative spirit between NHH and its community partners to sustain and adapt the service for over three years.

The Centre opened its doors to the public on March 14, 2020, less than 24-hours after the first positive case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Northumberland County and three days after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

Initially, the Centre offered COVID-19 assessment and testing only and was housed within the hospital proper, inside a cordoned off area within NHH's Ambulatory Care Clinic, before moving to a trailer located outside of the hospital's Emergency Department as regular services within the Ambulatory Care Clinic resumed.

With support from Northumberland Paramedics and the Municipality of Port Hope a satellite location was temporarily added at the Port Hope Community Hub in the village of Canton, before [winding down in June 2021](#). When COVID-19 treatment options became available this service was added as well, first through an initial partnership between NHH and the COVID-19 team at Lakeridge Health before the Centre assumed the ability to administer treatment independently with support from the NHH Pharmacy and area primary care physicians.

In December 2022, the Centre, by then consolidated to only one location at NHH, rebranded to the Cough, Cold, and COVID Assessment Centre. On the urging of area care providers and the NHH Emergency Department the Centre expanded services once again to provide testing, assessment, and treatment options for both COVID-19 and respiratory-focused illnesses, preserving capacity for local Emergency Departments and primary care providers alike.

To date, through the course of the pandemic, the Centre has logged more than 55,000 visits, including individual visits to the Centres at NHH, the satellite site in Canton and the outreach testing deployed by the team in collaboration with OHT-N partners and the

Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit to area retirement and other congregate settings.

“The COVID-19 pandemic had an immense impact on the health care landscape. Our teams were called on to reimagine how we could deliver safe, efficient care while sustaining and protecting our existing resources for the community’s most vulnerable populations,” said NHH President and CEO Susan Walsh.

“The Cough, Cold and COVID Assessment Centre is a very powerful example of the strength and value of community partnerships and teamwork. During a time of uncertainty, we were able to join together and create a one-stop shop to support individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and respiratory-focused illnesses who were in need of fast, effective care. There were many hands involved in this work. Please join us in thanking every member of the Assessment Centre team, including the critical teams such as the Pharmacy, Laboratory, Health Records, IT and Environmental Services staff who supported the Centre’s operations, the area primary care partners who devoted countless hours and all of the many partners involved who stepped up during very difficult circumstances to serve their community for over three years through the many challenges presented by this pandemic.”

Options for future care

COVID numbers have dropped but the virus remains in circulation. Steps to minimize risk, including vaccination and masking when appropriate, continue to be recommended.

Members of the general public with mild symptoms of COVID-19 generally do not require PCR testing to confirm the diagnosis. Rapid antigen test (RAT) kits are available for personal use at no cost through select [grocery stores and pharmacies](#).

Beyond March 31, individuals seeking testing, assessment, and treatment options for COVID-19 or respiratory-focused illnesses will have several options, including their primary care provider or [participating pharmacies](#) in Northumberland County and surrounding areas.

Individuals must meet [Ontario COVID-10 PCR testing eligibility requirements](#) to access testing at local pharmacies. Travel testing is not included. It is recommended to call the pharmacy ahead of time to arrange the test as service times may vary.

Pharmacists can now prescribe anti-viral treatment, Paxlovid, to eligible individuals in person or by phone at no cost. Eligible individuals should contact their local pharmacy to confirm if they prescribe Paxlovid, and how to get a prescription. Treatment must begin within 5 days of symptom onset. A positive RAT is sufficient to access Paxlovid, a positive PCR test is no longer required.

For additional information regarding COVID-19, including PCR and Rapid Antigen testing guidelines, vaccine clinics and eligibility, please visit the Haliburton, Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit [website](#).

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About Northumberland Hills Hospital – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, obstetrical care and palliative care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care and rehabilitation. Mental health care, cancer and supportive care, dialysis and other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 63,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope, Alderville First Nation and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs more than 700 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians, midwives and volunteers. NHH is an active member of Ontario Health (East)—formerly the Central East Local Health Integration Network—and the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland. For more information, please visit nhh.ca or follow us on Facebook [@northumberlandhillshosp](https://www.facebook.com/northumberlandhillshosp) or Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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