



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE

Visiting temporarily paused on Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit as new COVID-19 outbreak declared

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Tuesday, January 24, 2023—Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is experiencing its first surge in COVID-19 cases since October 2022.

After consultation with the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU), NHH Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) leads, and staff, NHH has made the difficult decision to temporarily pause visiting to NHH's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit due to an outbreak of COVID-19 cases.

There are currently four active COVID-19 cases among admitted inpatients on the Rehabilitation Unit.

Consistent with past outbreaks, visiting exceptions to COVID-19-positive patients on the Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit will continue to be made for those at imminent end of life, on consultation with IPAC and the health care team.

Visiting continues as usual outside the Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit unless patients are in isolation for COVID-19 infection or exposure. Limited exceptions are made for COVID-19 positive patients on discussion with IPAC and the care team including, for example, those at imminent end-of-life.

The following is a summary of the infection prevention and control measures in place at NHH:

- **Temporary closure of 1A: Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit to all new admission**
- **Daily self-screening by staff for COVID-19 symptoms** – All individuals entering the hospital for work must pre-screen for symptoms and refrain from entering the building or community mental health offices in the event symptoms develop.
- **Mandatory use of appropriate PPE** – All staff, physicians, midwives and essential caregivers/visitors are expected to pay strict attention to Personal
- **Protective Equipment (PPE)** requirements throughout the hospital and NHH's universal masking policy remains in effect.
- **Cohorting of patients considered “high risk contacts”** – Any patients identified as having a high risk of exposure have been co-located into the same area, tested and cared for with appropriate precautions.
- **Mandatory vaccination of staff** – All staff and physicians are required to be up

to date with their vaccines (two doses); booster vaccines continue to be distributed to further reduce the risk of infection and spread.

- **Strict adherence to thorough hand hygiene practices** – Strict adherence to thorough hand hygiene will continue to be reinforced.
- **Enhanced environmental cleaning** – enhanced cleaning, with a focus on equipment shared between patient rooms
- **Proactive communication** – Public notices are continually updated across NHH’s communication channels, including on doorways within/leading to the hospital, to promote awareness of the presence of COVID-19 and the importance of vigilance with PPE.

Universal masking remains a shared responsibility to mitigate spread

As a high-risk setting, NHH’s universal masking policy continues to remain in place throughout the hospital and Community Mental Health offices. Visitors have access to free masks on entry to the hospital and NHH’s Community Mental Health offices and will be expected to keep their medical-grade mask on at all times (or over top of their personal cloth mask) while inside, unless eating or drinking in designated areas. No eating or drinking is permitted by visitors in patient rooms, due to the fact that masks would need to be removed. Mask dispensers will be found at public entrances to the hospital and Community Mental Health.

“Despite NHH’s ongoing universal masking policy, we continue to see some visitors taking a relaxed approach to masking while inside the hospital, by either removing their mask after entry, eating or drinking in patient rooms, or letting it drop down below their nose or chin,” said Ellen Douglas, Manager of Infection Prevention and Control at NHH. “As we have seen before, this has not only contributed to some patients contracting COVID-19, but now an outbreak on our Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit. All visitors are reminded that when they do not wear their mask properly or consistently while inside the hospital, there is an increased infection risk to the loved ones they are visiting, as well as other vulnerable patients around them. The message continues to be: please wear your mask.”

For details on NHH’s Visiting Guidelines and expectations, including virtual visiting options and answers to other Frequently Asked Questions, please see our website.

Updates on NHH’s COVID-19 status will continue to be communicated through the hospital’s website and related social media channels. Community outbreak information will be found on the HKPRDHU website,

<https://www.hkpr.on.ca/category/mycommunity/outbreaks/>

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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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