



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE

Visiting temporarily paused on Restorative Care Unit as new COVID-19 outbreak declared

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Tuesday, September 20, 2022 – Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is experiencing another surge in COVID-19 cases after recently reinstating public visiting back to its 2A Medical/Surgical Unit following an outbreak.

After consultation with the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU), NHH Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) leads, staff and members of the hospital's Patient and Family Advisory Council, NHH has made the difficult decision to temporarily pause visiting to NHH's Restorative Care Unit due to a new outbreak of COVID-19 cases.

As of September 20th, there are five active COVID-19 cases among admitted inpatients on the Restorative Care Unit. Across the hospital as a whole, including the Restorative Care patients, there are currently eight admitted patients with COVID-19.

Consistent with past outbreaks, visiting exceptions to COVID-19-positive patients on Restorative Care 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 Restorative Care 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 Restorative Care 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 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 have been added at public entrances to the hospital and Community Mental Health. The dispensers are meant to augment the support by NHH Auxiliary volunteers who have been exceptional at helping to distribute masks and remind incoming patients and visitors of the importance of Personal Protective Equipment while inside the hospital.

”Despite NHH’s universal masking policy, we continue to see some visitors taking a relaxed approach to masking while inside the hospital, either removing the mask after entry, letting it drop down around their chin, or removing it once in a patient room. Unfortunately, we believe that this has contributed to some patients contracting COVID-19,” said Ellen Douglas, Manager of Infection Prevention and Control at NHH. “For our care teams, it is extremely hard to enforce masking when some visitors simply do not acknowledge the risk for themselves, the loved ones they are visiting, and other vulnerable patients around them when masks are not worn in high-risk settings like hospitals. Masks work. If you are visiting a loved one at NHH, please wear a mask, and please wear it properly and consistently throughout your stay to help us minimize the risk of further outbreaks in the future.”

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/my-community/outbreaks/>

Media contact: Jennifer Gillard, Senior Director, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, jjillard@nhh.ca or 905-377-7757.

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, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 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 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope, Alderville First Nation and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alwick/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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