



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19 Visitor Policy update Visiting restrictions to ease again, beginning Monday, March 21, 2022 – Mandatory masking to remain

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, March 21, 2022 – With key public health and health system indicators continuing to improve, a further update to the Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) COVID-19 Visitor Policy is being implemented following consultation with staff, physicians, infection prevention specialists and members of the hospital's Patient and Family Advisory Council.

Effective Monday, March 21, NHH will further relax COVID-19 visitor restrictions on both inpatient units and within the Emergency Department/Short Stay Unit. A daily maximum of two visitors or essential caregivers will now be permitted between the hours of 8AM to 8PM. To minimize the number of individuals in patient rooms at any one time, these two visitors will not be permitted simultaneously. Exceptions to the two person per day and 8AM to 8PM rule continue as follows:

- For inpatients at imminent end of life additional visitors will be considered at the discretion of the care team
- For obstetrical patients, birth partner AND labour coach will be permitted
- For outpatients, the following exceptions are permitted:
 - essential caregivers for children coming to the hospital for care (children = 18 and under)
 - essential caregivers for those with communication challenges and/or cognitive impairments - outpatient clinic settings only (Dialysis, Diagnostic Imaging, etc.)

As in the past, inpatients or their substitute decision makers will be responsible for selecting who they wish their two daily visitors/essential caregivers to be, and to communicate that wish to the rest of their family/social circle in advance of any visit to avoid people having to be turned away at the entrance.

What door should visitors use to enter?

Visitors to those admitted to an inpatient bed continue to be encouraged to enter/exit at the main front entrance, between the hours of 8AM and 8PM, to minimize traffic into the Emergency Department and through the hospital. Visitors to patients within the Emergency Department and adjacent Short Stay Unit should enter via the Emergency Department. Anyone arriving for a visit outside of the regular 8AM to 8PM visiting hours must use the Emergency Department entrance. All visitors/essential caregivers will continue to be required to sign in and document their contact information for purposes of contact tracing. All visitors/essential caregivers must

pass the screening process and will be expected to follow all required infection prevention and control practices for the duration of their stay within the hospital.

Rapid Antigen Testing to be concluded, effective March 21

As an additional temporary precaution against the spread of COVID-19, NHH has been piloting the use of Rapid Antigen Tests for those visiting admitted inpatients as part of the screening process. In light of the very low volume of positive cases identified and the steadily declining COVID-19 cases in the community, NHH will stop the Rapid Antigen Testing requirement for visitors on Monday, March 21.

Universal masking and active screening continue

While the provincial mask mandate will be lifted in a variety of public settings on Monday, March 21, NHH, as a high-risk setting, will be maintaining all enhanced infection control measures for the time being, including universal masking, active screening at all entrances and mandatory vaccination for all staff, physicians, midwives, contractors and volunteers. NHH will continue to monitor COVID-19 activity in and around our region, recognizing that we have a responsibility to provide a safe care environment for the vulnerable patients we serve—many of whom cannot wear masks—and that masks and vaccination are effective ways of protecting each other and those we serve. Visitors will continue to be provided with medical-grade masks upon entry and will be expected to always wear this mask while in the hospital and within our community mental health offices, except for instances in the cafeteria when the mask must be removed to eat or drink. Likewise, all precautions for NHH staff, physicians and midwives remain in place, including active screening at entrances and universal masking.

No in-person visiting in event inpatient unit declared on outbreak

Visiting will continue to be on hold for inpatients whose room is located in a COVID-19 hot zone (i.e. a unit designated in a COVID-19 'outbreak' status by Public Health) OR confirmed or presumed positive for COVID-19. As of today (March 18, 2022) there are no active COVID-19 outbreaks at NHH. Previously provided on our public website each Monday, Wednesday and Friday, updates on the status of COVID-19 at NHH will conclude on March 21, 2021 and be communicated publicly on an ad hoc basis moving forward, as required.

Virtual visiting option continues

Virtual visiting appointments continue to be a good alternative to consider if you are unable to enter the hospital at this time to see a loved one. Virtual visiting is available Monday through Friday. Virtual visits may be requested by either patients or by their family members or friends. Phone appointments are also available on request.

Those interested in requesting a Virtual Visiting appointment with an individual admitted to NHH can contact the hospital's Virtual visiting Team at 905-372-6811 ext. 3146 or send an email to virtualconnections@nhh.ca and include their preferred contact information, as well as the unit, room number and initials of the patient they would like to connect with (note: to protect patient privacy, the patient's full name should not be included in the email).

For further information on visiting at NHH, including our related COVID-19 Visitor Policy and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, as well as details on Virtual visiting, see our website at www.nhh.ca/Patients/VisitingGuidelines

For the latest information on COVID-19, including links to related resources, please see the COVID section on the hospital's website, nhh.ca/covid-19

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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, 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 and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 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. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca or follow us on Facebook [@northumberlandhillshosp](https://www.facebook.com/northumberlandhillshosp) or Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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