



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In-person visiting hours to be extended at Northumberland Hills Hospital, while maximum number of visitors/essential caregivers per day remains limited to one – COVID-19 Visitor Policy expectations still apply

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, October 16th, 2020—Visitor and family presence is integral to patient safety, the healing process, the patient’s medical and psychological well-being, comfort and quality of life.

While Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) offered an open visiting policy prior to the global pandemic, traffic within the hospital remains restricted at this time to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and help keep patients, the health care team and visitors safe.

In step with provincial direction, in-person visits were initially limited, in the earlier stages of the pandemic, to essential visitors only, including: a patient that is dying or very ill; a support for a delivering mother; a parent/guardian of a child or family caregiver deemed essential for an individual with specific needs.

“While essential visiting has been continuously permitted for selected patients throughout the pandemic, in July 2020 NHH relaxed restrictions for other visitors when the hospital moved into Phase Two of its COVID-19 Visitor Policy,” said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO. “This meant one designated essential caregiver (or visitor), as identified by the patient, was able to visit all admitted patients inside the ‘cold zone’—the area of the hospital without patients confirmed or presumed positive for COVID-19—but only on weekends and statutory holidays, and within a restricted window of time (1PM to 5PM).

In mid-September NHH expanded these designated inpatient visiting hours to 7 days per week, within the same timeframe (1PM to 5PM). In addition, visitors (one per patient, per day) were also permitted within the Emergency Department (ED), such that all patients being attended to within the ED are now allowed to have one visitor throughout their stay.

NEW visiting hour extension, effective Monday, October 19th

Effective Monday, October 19th, one in-person visitor per patient, per day will continue to be able to visit:

- ✓ admitted ‘cold zone’ inpatients AND Emergency Department patients
- ✓ 7 days per week

Visiting hours within inpatient units will expand from four hours a day to 12 hours a day, 7 days a week (8AM to 8PM). Visiting will continue to be permitted for the essential caregiver 24 hours a day within the Emergency Department.

Visitors will continue to be on hold for any patient in a COVID-19 ‘hot zone’ (i.e., confirmed or presumed positive for COVID-19).

All visitors must be 16 years of age or older and will be required to sign in at entry at the end of their visit, to support contact tracing should that be required.

“We are hopeful that by expanding the hours of visiting access, more individuals will be accommodated,” said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO. “We have consulted with our Patient and Family Advisory Council on this change, and there is agreement that it is a good approach at this time. We thank everyone for their patience and understanding as we work to balance safety with access. As always, decisions related to the application of NHH’s COVID-19 Visitor Policy in special circumstances will rest at the discretion of the care team in consultation with the patient and/or their primary family caregiver.”

COVID-19 visitor expectations

NHH reminds all patients and visitors that the following expectations continue to be applicable throughout the duration of the pandemic.

The patient and/or substitute decision maker will:

- ✓ Alert in advance the individual they wish to have as their visitor/essential caregiver on any one day. This person may change from day-to-day, but only one visitor/essential caregiver per admitted inpatient is permitted each day, with the exception of those inpatients who are palliative or end-of-life

The visitor will:

- ✓ be 16 years or older*
- ✓ pass the screening criteria upon entry (if screening is failed, the visitor will be asked to go to the Assessment Centre or ED for testing)
- ✓ per the hospital’s Universal Mask Policy, don a mask that covers both mouth and nose, and keep it on for the duration of the visit (visitors are encouraged to bring their own mask—where one is not available, a mask will be provided)
- ✓ log their name and contact information on the sign-in sheet at entry (visitor names/contact information will be maintained by the hospital for 30 days to support timely communication in the event contact tracing is required)
- ✓ clean their hands with hand sanitizer provided – if wearing gloves, visitors will be required to remove the gloves prior to entry and discard to ensure hands are cleaned thoroughly
- ✓ restrict their presence to the patient’s bedside only, and maintain physical distancing
- ✓ wear a visitor ID badge, to support clear identification when inside the hospital
- ✓ follow COVID-19 Visitor Policy visiting hours (recognizing these continue to be subject to change)
- ✓ use public washrooms only (i.e., not the washroom in the patient’s room)
- ✓ refrain from going in and out of the patient’s room
- ✓ avoid bringing food or drink into the hospital where possible and, where food or drink is permitted, or purchased from within the hospital, ensure it is consumed at the patient bedside, using appropriate infection prevention and control practices, and not in corridors or common areas.

**recognizing the unique circumstances of palliative/end-of-life patients, the care team may make exceptions to permit children under the age of 16*

Anyone feeling unwell should not visit a hospital patient. Only service animals are permitted into NHH at this time. Personal pets/therapeutic animals are not permitted. An overhead page will continue to remind visitors when the designated COVID-19 visiting period is ending, and those required to leave will be expected to exit from the main (front) entrance.

Virtual Visiting option continues

NHH's Virtual Visiting program continues to be available weekdays. Virtual visits may be scheduled weekdays by contacting the hospital's Virtual Visiting Team at 905-372-6811 ext. 3146 or by email to virtualconnections@nhh.ca. Note: to protect patient privacy, the patient's full name should not be included in the email.

Appeal process in place to address any concerns or special circumstances

The above restrictions will continue for the foreseeable future. Local cases, as [reported by the HKPRD Health Unit](#), continue to be closely monitored. In the event that an in-hospital outbreak should occur, including evidence of hospital-acquired infection, the hospital will return to Phase One of its COVID-19 Visitor Policy, limiting once again to essential family caregivers/visitors only and the virtual connection option.

Any individual patient and/or visitor with concerns regarding the COVID-19 Visitor Policy is encouraged to contact the manager of the patient care unit involved for discussion and resolution during business hours. In the event a visitor-related concern arises outside of business hours, when unit managers are not typically on site, the Clinical Operations Manager has been designated as the point person responsible for addressing the questions, in consultation with NHH's Patient Relations Manager or manager/senior manager on call.

For further information on visiting during the COVID-19 pandemic, please see the related policy and Frequently Asked Questions document on our website at: www.nhh.ca/Patients/VisitingGuidelines

For news, updates, information and resources related to COVID-19, please visit our website at: www.nhh.ca/covid-19

Media contact: Jennifer Gillard, Senior Director, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, jgillard@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 and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians 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 Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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