



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Planning ahead for a safe, healthy holiday season – Six tips for a healthy start to winter

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Tuesday, December 14, 2021—With the daily number of new cases of COVID-19 on the rise in Ontario, and a sharp increase in the proportion of those cases confirmed to be the highly transmissible Omicron variant, the race toward vaccination is speeding up just as the cold weather and the holiday season (bringing family and social groups together indoors) is also taking off.

All eligible Ontarians are strongly encouraged to book vaccine appointments as soon as possible, especially those who have not yet received a first or second dose. In [an announcement last week](#), Ontario confirmed that, starting December 13, individuals aged 50 and over are now eligible to schedule their booster dose appointment. Expanded booster dose eligibility for all Ontarians 18 and older is scheduled to begin January 4, with appointments to be booked approximately six months after receiving a second dose.

It has been almost two years since the global pandemic was declared and we have learned a great deal about the virus in that time. “As we head into the holiday season, it is critically important that we each continue to do all we can to minimize the risk of COVID-19 taking hold in our community and our homes,” said Susan Walsh, President and CEO.

Below are six tips we can all take for a healthy start to winter. “As we have been from the start of this journey, we are truly in this together,” added Walsh. “NHH will be here for you should you need us.”

- 1) Get vaccinated as soon as you are eligible** – to book a COVID-19 vaccine appointment for yourself or a loved one, change an existing appointment, or download a copy of your vaccine certificate visit [Ontario.ca/bookvaccine](https://ontario.ca/bookvaccine) or call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900. Updates on local vaccine clinic information will also be found on the local Health Unit website at hkpr.on.ca/2021/09/01/vaccination-clinics/. Families with questions about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine for children can reach out virtually to the [COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service at Sick Kids hospital](#), or call the team at 437-881-3505.
- 2) Follow the advice of Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health and our local medical officer of health** – pay attention to appropriate masking practices and keep the size and number of social and holiday gatherings small. Additional precautions should be taken if all individuals are not fully vaccinated or where vaccination status is unknown.
- 3) Stay home from work, school and public events if you are sick and get tested if you have COVID-19 symptoms** – NHH’s COVID-19 Assessment Centre is open daily (with the exception of statutory holidays) for pre-scheduled appointments between 8AM to 4PM, at 1000 DePalma Drive, in the trailer immediately outside the Emergency Department. Call **905-377-7783 to book**. Walk-in appointments are not available.

- 4) **Get your flu shot** - Recommended for those six months of age and older, the flu vaccine is available from family physician offices, community health centres, walk-in clinics and pharmacies. For a full list of pharmacies offering flu vaccination clinics in the area, plus answers to frequently asked questions, see the [local Health Unit website](#).
- 5) **Pay attention to your doctor/nurse practitioner's holiday hours and plan ahead when possible to avoid unnecessary trips to the Emergency Department** - Local primary care offices will have special hours of operation over the holiday season. Now, in advance of these closures, is the time to check to see when your doctor or nurse practitioner will be available and to confirm your family's prescriptions are up-to-date so you can minimize non-urgent trips to the ED.
- 6) **Consider Emergency Department alternatives** - NHH's Emergency Department is always ready when you need it, but the team recommends considering area primary care offices or community clinics for non-emergency health concerns. Many local family physicians operate after-hour clinics, accessible to their patients only. Check to see if your primary care provider has an after-hour service in place. If your situation is non-urgent, your primary care provider isn't available, or you have no primary care provider you can also get free telephone access to a Registered Nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through the **Telehealth Ontario** service at 1-866-797-0000 (TTY 1-866-797-0007).

Best wishes to all for a safe, happy and healthy holiday season. We are all looking forward to the new year and, hopefully, 2023 will be the year we can, finally, put this pandemic behind us.

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 more than 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 more than 700 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 nhh.ca or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp) or Facebook [@northumberlandhillshosp](https://www.facebook.com/northumberlandhillshosp)

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