



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE

Volume of admitted patients with COVID-19 continues to rise at Northumberland Hills Hospital – Visiting temporarily paused on 2A Medical/Surgical Unit as outbreak declared

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, August 19, 2022 – While Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) staff had hoped to be in a position to share good news this week that cases of COVID-19 are declining among admitted patients, the Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) team is instead doubling down on efforts to protect patients, staff and their loved ones in the face of this persistent virus.

After consultation with the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU), NHH IPAC leads, and members of the hospital's Patient and Family Advisory Council, NHH has made the difficult decision to temporarily pause visiting to NHH's 2A Medical/Surgical Unit where the majority of confirmed COVID-19 cases (9 of 13) are currently located. Visiting exceptions to COVID-19-positive patients on 2A will continue to be made for those at imminent end of life, on consultation with IPAC and the health care team.

“Our infection prevention and control team has worked very closely with our counterparts at the HKPRDHU, following the announcement of a previous COVID-19 outbreak earlier this month, to minimize opportunities for transmission inside the hospital,” said Dr. Jude Obomighie. “We are unfortunately seeing new infections continue to develop with a clear pattern of linkage to both patient-to-patient and visitor contact. By co-horting affected patients in one unit, closing it to admissions and restricting visitors we aim to stop the number of cases from growing while we work to find new and creative ways to appeal to the public to recognize the critical importance of proper and consistent masking while in high risk settings.”

“We are hopeful that this visiting pause will be shortlived for 2A,” added Dr. Obomighie, “but we will continue to act as required to ensure our patients and our team are as safe and supported as possible. We thank everyone for their continued cooperation. COVID-19 remains a reality and it is certainly a shared responsibility among all of us, staff, patients and visitors, to stop it in its tracks.”

Visiting continues outside the 2A Medical/Surgical 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 2A 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 policy critical to managing spread

As a high-risk setting, NHH's universal masking policy remains in place throughout the hospital and Community Mental Health offices. Visitors continue to 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. This is 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.

"I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of universal masking inside a high-risk setting like a hospital," adds Dr. Obomighie. "It is a small gesture, but when worn properly and consistently masks are essential to controlling the spread of this virus and our duty to protect one another and keep our teams functioning. If you are visiting NHH, or entering for medical purposes, please don a mask and wear it properly throughout

your entire visit. Do not visit a loved one if you are sick or if you have reason to believe you may have been exposed.”

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/>

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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, 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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