



# NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

## NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***In-person visiting hours set to expand at Northumberland Hills Hospital effective Monday, September 14 – COVID-19 Visitor Policy expectations still apply***

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, September 10th, 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 COVID-19, traffic within the hospital has unfortunately been restricted since the onset of the pandemic, 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, 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, on Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, NHH moved into Phase Two of its COVID-19 Visitor Policy,” said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO. “This meant one designated family 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—on weekends and statutory holidays, between 1PM and 5PM.

Following careful monitoring of the volume of traffic inside the hospital, NHH is now preparing to safely expand 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) will also be permitted within the Emergency Department (ED), such that all patients being attended to within the ED will also now be allowed to have one visitor throughout their stay.

### ***New visiting hours effective Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>***

Effective Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, one in-person visitor per patient per day will be able to visit:

- ✓ admitted ‘cold zone’ inpatients AND Emergency Department patients
- ✓ 7 days per week
- ✓ one visitor at a time

Visiting hours within inpatient units will remain as they have been on weekends: between 1300 to 1700 (1PM and 5PM). Visiting will be permitted 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).

The patient will continue to identify one visitor per patient per day, or primary family caregiver for individuals with specific needs. All visitors must be 16 years of age or older and will be required to sign in at entry and sign out at the end of their visit, to support contact tracing should that be required.

“The 1PM to 5PM timeframe for inpatient visits continues to be the time of day selected as it is a time when traffic within the hospital is typically lower and flow at entry/exit points into and out of the hospital can be more safely coordinated to ensure the necessary physical distancing requirements is maintained,” said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO. “Again, we thank everyone for their patience and understanding as we work to balance safety with access. Our COVID-19 Visitor Policy aims to provide clarity for visitors and staff alike, during the various phases of the pandemic. As always, decisions related to the application of this policy in specific 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***

The following expectations will continue to be applicable to all visitors throughout the duration of the pandemic. The visitor will:

- ✓ be approved by the patient (at discretion of the care team)
- ✓ 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, and sign out at the end of the visit (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.

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](mailto: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, assuming there is no significant local increase of positive cases. Local cases, as [reported by the HKPRD Health Unit](#), continue to be closely monitored. In the event that confirmed positive cases in the community rise substantially, or an in-hospital outbreak should occur, 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](http://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](http://www.nhh.ca/covid-19)

Media contact: Jennifer Gillard, Senior Director, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, [jjillard@nhh.ca](mailto: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 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](http://www.nhh.ca) or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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