



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In-person weekend visiting scheduled to resume at Northumberland Hills Hospital July 25th – COVID-19 Visitor Policy restrictions apply

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Wednesday, July 22nd, 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 have been limited to date 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. A new virtual visiting program—introduced in April to ease the challenge for families and patients alike—has enabled more than 200 virtual patient visits, thanks to the support of local donors, who supplied the necessary iPads.

“Beginning this Saturday, July 25th, NHH will move into Phase Two of its COVID-19 Visitor Policy,” said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO. “This means one designated family caregiver (or visitor), as identified by the patient, will be able to visit admitted patients inside the ‘cold zone’—the area of the hospital without COVID-19 patients.”

Effective Saturday, July 25th, in-person visits will be available to:

- ✓ admitted ‘cold zone’ inpatients
- ✓ on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays)
- ✓ between 1300 to 1700 (1PM and 5PM)
- ✓ one visitor at a time.

“The weekend afternoon visiting period was selected as it is a time when traffic within the hospital is typically low and flow at entry/exit points into and out of the hospital can be safely coordinated to ensure the necessary physical distancing requirements is maintained,” said Linda Davis, NHH President and CEO. “We recognize the hardship families have faced because of the restrictions Ontario hospitals implemented, and 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. 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.”

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)
- ✓ 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 within the logbook (logs will be maintained by the hospital for 30 days to support timely communication in the event this 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 are 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
- ✓ refrain from bringing outside food or drink in for the visitor

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

The above restrictions will continue for the foreseeable future, assuming no significant local increase of positive cases is documented. 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.

NHH’s Virtual Visiting program will continue to be available. 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.

NHH wishes to expressly thank the hospital’s [Patient and Family Advisory Council](#) and the [Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement](#) for the guidance provided to support this policy’s development and implementation. Per the recommendation of these two bodies, an appeal process has been established. Any individual patient and/or visitor with concerns regarding the COVID-19 Visitor Policy will be 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).

– END –