



## NEWS RELEASE

### **Working together to ensure access to emergency care during the holiday season**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016** – The arrival of flu season and the annual holiday closure of many local primary care offices means Northumberland Hills Hospital's Emergency Department (ED) will be busier than usual, especially between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

By planning ahead, and making use of alternative resources for non-emergency situations, we can minimize the seasonal strain on our local ED and help to keep the service accessible for those who need it the most. Below are a few steps we can all take to have a healthy holiday season.

#### **Influenza vaccination – Get your flu shot, not the flu**

Don't let the flu take the fun out of your holiday season. Protect yourself, your family and your community with a flu vaccination. Available from most family physician offices, community health centres, walk-in clinics and pharmacies, the flu vaccination is your best line of defense against a potentially dangerous virus.

#### **Wash your hands – often!**

Minimize your risk of picking up unwanted germs by washing your hands, often, especially when you are out in public. Regular, proper hand hygiene is the single most effective step you can take to stop the spread of seasonal viruses.

#### **Make note of your doctor's holiday hours and—where possible—plan ahead**

Many local family physician (primary care) offices will have special hours of operation over the holiday. Now is the time to check to see when your doctor's office will be open and to confirm your family's prescriptions are up-to-date in advance of any closure so you can minimize non-urgent trips to the ED.

#### **Consider Emergency Department alternatives**

NHH's Emergency Department is always ready when you need it, but the team does advise that you consider family doctors or community clinics for non-emergency health concerns. In the past year, a number of local family physicians have introduced NEW after-hour clinics, accessible to their patients only. Check to see if your family physician has an after-hour service in place. If your situation is non-urgent, and your family physician isn't available, 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).

- visit the **Port Hope Walk-In Clinic** at 249 Ontario Street, Port Hope. The Clinic (905-885-0611) will be open every day over the holidays, including December 24<sup>th</sup>, from 10AM to 4PM (at the discretion of the physician working each day) with the exception of December 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup>, when the Clinic will be closed.
- Check the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care **Your Health Care Options** website at <https://www.ontario.ca/locations/health/> for information on the various health-care services in your area.

Northumberland Hills Hospital extends best wishes to all for a safe, happy and healthy holiday season.

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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 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 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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