



## **NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Suspected norovirus outbreak – No restrictions for hospital visitors at this time**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013** – A cluster of suspected cases of a norovirus has been identified on the Restorative Care Unit at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH).

NHH is working closely with the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit to identify the virus and communicate information to surrounding health care facilities, including hospitals, retirement residences and long-term care facilities. The following control measures have been put in place at NHH to manage the situation and prevent transmission:

- **Contact precautions** - Identified cases are on contact precautions (isolation). Isolated patients must remain in their room except when medically indicated procedures are required. Appropriate use of personal protective equipment, such as gloves and gowns, is required for all who enter the room.
- **No new admissions to the affected unit** - The Restorative Care Unit is not accepting new admissions and will postpone patient transfers to and from other units for the time being.
- **Strict enforcement of proper hand hygiene** – This remains one of the most important infection prevention and control practices to stop transmission of gastrointestinal illness and other infectious diseases.
- **Proactive communication** - Public notices have been placed on all hospital entrances as well as to the doorways of the affected and surrounding units, with reminders regarding hand hygiene. NHH's Backgrounder detailing Visitor Tips for Minimizing the Spread of Infections is also in circulation and available on [www.nhh.ca](http://www.nhh.ca)
- **Enhanced environmental cleaning** - Increased cleaning of the unit and increased cleaning of equipment shared between patient rooms has been implemented.
- **Monitoring** - Any patient who develops new on-set of any of the following symptoms (nausea, diarrhea and vomiting) will be placed on contact precautions pending lab confirmation.

NHH remains fully operational, with programs and services across the hospital unaffected.

**NHH reminds all visitors to be diligent in practicing appropriate hand hygiene and infection prevention and control practices when visiting the hospital at any time. Frequent hand washing, particularly before and after patient contact, is mandatory and vital to reducing health care-associated infections.**

## **Fast facts on norovirus:**

### What is norovirus?

Norovirus is the term given to a group of viruses that cause gastroenteritis—an illness that usually includes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Noroviruses are commonly found throughout North America and cases tend to be more common at this time of year. They reside in the stool or vomit of infected people. The viruses are very contagious and can spread easily from person to person. The Public Health Agency of Canada reports that “*people can become infected with the virus in several ways, including: through direct contact with another person who is infected (for example, caring for or diapering an ill child, sharing food or eating utensils with an ill person); touching surfaces or objects contaminated with a norovirus (such as door handles); and eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated.*”<sup>1</sup>

### How long do symptoms last?

People exposed to the virus usually develop symptoms of illness within 24 to 48 hours, but symptoms can occur as quickly as 12 hours after exposure. People infected with a norovirus can be contagious from the moment they start feeling ill to at least three days after they have recovered.

### Diagnosis and treatment?

A norovirus is diagnosed through a laboratory test on the stool of an infected person. There is no vaccine or antiviral medication to prevent getting sick with a norovirus and antibiotics are not effective in treating the illness. Healthy people normally recover within one or two days, and symptoms resolve on their own. To prevent dehydration, fluid intake should be increased. Young children, the elderly and those with other illnesses are at greatest risk for dehydration.

Updates will be provided as required.

For information contact Jennifer Gillard (Northumberland Hills Hospital) at 905-377-7757 or [jgillard@nhh.ca](mailto:jgillard@nhh.ca).

**About Northumberland Hills Hospital –** Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, and obstetrical care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care, rehabilitation and palliative care. 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).

1 Public Health Agency of Canada, Norovirus fact sheet, retrieved January 30th, 2013 from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fs-sa/fs-fi/norovirus-eng.php>