



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE

COVID-19 outbreak extended to NHH's 2A/2B Medical/Surgical Units – Temporary pause on visiting and volunteers extended to all affected units

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, October 19, 2023—With the number of confirmed COVID-19 infections increasing at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH), an outbreak has now been declared on the hospital's Medical/Surgical Units (2A/2B) in addition to the ongoing outbreak in the Inpatient Rehabilitation and Restorative Care Units (1A/2B) first identified on Monday, October 16.

In total, NHH has currently confirmed 18 cases of COVID-19 among inpatients. No cases of staff or physician infections have been identified in the outbreak areas at this time.

In light of the rising presence of COVID-19 both inside the hospital and in the community at large, visitor and volunteer restrictions are being extended, effective immediately, to both Medical/Surgical units (2A/2B) in addition to the existing pause implemented earlier in the week on Inpatient Rehabilitation (1A) and Restorative Care (1B).

Visiting and volunteering continues as usual outside the Inpatient Rehabilitation, Restorative Care and Medical/Surgical Units unless it involves individual patients in isolation for confirmed COVID-19 infections or exposure or other contagious infections. As always, visiting exceptions will be made for COVID-19 positive patients on discussion with Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) staff and the care team including, for example, those at imminent end-of-life.

The following is an updated summary of the infection prevention and control measures in place at NHH to minimize risk and stop the outbreaks as soon as possible:

- **Visiting restrictions** – Regular visiting is now paused to NHH's Inpatient Rehabilitation, Restorative Care and Medical/Surgical Units; exceptions will continue to be made, on discussion with the care team and Infection Prevention and Control, for those at imminent end-of-life. Visitors who have recently developed COVID-19 are not permitted to visit patients for 10 full days from the date of symptom onset or from testing positive (whichever date is earliest).
- **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 in clinical and patient care areas** – All staff, physicians, midwives, and essential caregivers/visitors are expected to pay strict attention to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements throughout the

hospital. NHH's regular [masking guidelines](#) remain in effect for all clinical and patient care areas and enhanced requirements are in place throughout outbreak areas. Visitors continue to have access to free masks at entry to the hospital and NHH's Community Mental Health offices and will be expected to keep their masks on at all times while inside clinical areas.

- **No eating or drinking is permitted by visitors in patient rooms** – NHH reminds all visitors to please refrain from bringing food, coffee or other treats in to share in inpatient rooms. This is due to the fact that masks would need to be removed and greatly increases the risk of infection among vulnerable patients.
- **Monitoring of patients considered “high risk contacts”** – Any patients identified as having a high risk of exposure have been relocated, tested, and are being 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** – Careful attention to thorough and frequent hand hygiene will continue to be reinforced.
- **Enhanced environmental cleaning** – Enhanced cleaning, with a focus on high touch surfaces and common spaces, has been implemented across all units on outbreak.
- **Proactive communication** – Public notices are continually updated across NHH's communication channels, including doorways within/leading to the hospital, to promote awareness of the presence of COVID-19 and the importance of vigilance with PPE. Inquiry Desk and Emergency Department volunteers are also a critical support to helping maintain awareness of masking guidelines.

Masking remains a shared responsibility to mitigate spread

Masking continues to remain in place throughout clinical and patient care areas in hospital and NHH's Community Mental Health offices. Visitors have access to free masks on entry and are 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.

“While we know the positive impact of a visit from a loved one, and deeply regret the need to temporarily pause our open visiting policy, we feel it is necessary given the sudden increase of COVID infections in the community and the hospital. These outbreaks are a clear reminder of COVID's ongoing presence,” said Dr. Jude Obomighie, NHH Physician IPAC Lead. “While most of us who contract COVID-19 at this stage will recover, we must consider the implications of this serious virus on inpatients, who are often already at their most vulnerable. We understand that masking and many other preventative measures have relaxed in the broader community. In a hospital environment, patients rely on all of us, as a collective, to prioritize their safety through proper use of masking and other precautions. Thank you for your continued support and cooperation.”

For details on NHH's [Visiting Guidelines](#), expectations, 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's recently updated, which provides a high-level assessment of local respiratory virus [Respiratory Diseases Dashboard](#) activity.

Media contact: Amy Seymour, Communications Officer, aseymour@nhh.ca or 905-372-6811 ext. 4009.

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, cancer and supportive care, dialysis and 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 63,000 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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