

NEWS RELEASE/FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Masking now optional across all areas of Northumberland Hills Hospital – Hospital will remain a mask friendly environment

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, May 9, 2024—Effective Thursday, May 9, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is joining other health care organizations in Ontario by shifting to optional masking across the hospital, including areas of clinical and patient care. NHH will remain a mask friendly environment and provide masks for all staff, physicians, midwives, volunteers, patients, and visitors upon request.

On the recommendation of NHH's Infection, Prevention and Control (IPAC) team following a thorough review of relevant and empirical data, NHH will resume its pre-pandemic requirements for all clinical teams, which requires care providers to complete a **Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA)** to determine what Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is required, specifically in instances where a patient is deemed to have a infectious illness or is being cared for with additional precautions due to a communicable illness. Patients with symptoms of communicable respiratory illness may be required to wear a mask within the hospital.

What is a Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA)?

A PCRA is a necessary assessment that is completed prior to any patient encounter and guides the appropriate selection and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). When interacting with a patient, a care provider will conduct a PCRA by considering the following:

- **The Patient** - Any additional precautions already in place; the patient's current symptoms; the patient's ability to perform hand hygiene or respiratory etiquette.
- **The Task** - The type of tasks to be carried out to support patient care; the potential for exposure to body fluids or substances; the need for any additional equipment to safely provide care.
- **The Environment** - Potential hazards that might impact safety when providing care e.g. the physical space and/or the risk to or from other individuals in shared rooms or other spaces.

"We are now at a place in the post-pandemic where NHH—along with many other care providers across the province—feels comfortable in resuming pre-COVID masking requirements," said Dr. Jude Obomighie, IPAC Physician Lead and Ellen Douglas, Registered Nurse, Manager, Occupational Health and Infection Control, Co-

Chairs of NHH IPAC. “At the beginning of COVID, we would often talk about what the future would hold, and we believe this shift to an optional, mask-friendly environment is another part of defining of our new normal. We are grateful for the cooperation and conscientiousness of our healthcare teams, visitors, and patients, who committed to masking over the past four years to ensure our hospital remained safe for all.”

For further questions on masks and visitor requirements, see our recently updated NHH Visiting Guidelines section of nhh.ca. Masking requirements will be subject to change or resume at any time on the recommendation of NHH's Infection Prevention and Control team (IPAC) and Public Health Ontario.

Questions? Don't hesitate to reach out to our Public Affairs department at ext. 4009.

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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