



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

NEWS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19 information at March 27, 2020 – Latest message to our community

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, March 27, 2020 — Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) staff, physicians and community partners are working very hard to keep ahead of the rapidly evolving situation regarding COVID-19.

“While the global pandemic is changing how we operate, NHH continues to provide essential services,” reiterated Linda Davis, President and CEO.

“NHH’s Incident Command Centre, established earlier this month, has been working at high speed, and the collaboration and communication that is occurring across teams, with our Ontario Health Team of Northumberland partners and between hospital and community physicians, is unlike anything we have ever seen. While there are confirmed positive COVID-19 cases on self-isolation in our community, there are presently no confirmed positive COVID-19 inpatients at NHH. We know that this will change in the coming days. We are grateful for this time, as we quickly scale back non-essential services and scale up for what we expect will be very ill COVID patients. As much capacity as possible is being created for COVID patients’ acute care needs while ensuring those without the virus can also be cared for and kept safe.”

The flood of provincial, national and international information is being monitored by the Command Table to support planning and preparation, and the team is updating processes and procedures as appropriate.

In addition to the process and service changes announced in NHH’s [Community Update on March 17](#)—including visitor restrictions, volunteer restrictions, the opening of the NHH COVID-19 Assessment Centre and a phone-in community mental health walk-in counselling clinic alternative—additional changes implemented at NHH this week include:

- Active screening for symptoms in all individuals, including staff and physicians, prior to entering the hospital, including temperature readings
- Release of new Personal Protective Equipment protocols for procedure (surgical) masks following the receipt of new direction from Ontario Health March 25 – with increasing reports of community spread of the virus, NHH is working to minimize the risk of staff-to-patient or patient-to-staff infection by asking all staff and physicians who work in clinical areas to wear a procedure (surgical) mask when they are working in a patient care or patient-facing area without a structural physical barrier (e.g. plexiglass).
- Hands-on training of over 400 staff and physicians to review donning and doffing procedures for essential Personal Protective Equipment
- Patient care mapping to establish pre-arranged pathways of care to accommodate the possible scenarios of COVID-19-positive patients who may present to NHH
- Shift to essential only services in Diagnostic Imaging, Ambulatory Care and Surgical Services – all non-essential tests or procedure booked at NHH have or are in the process of being postponed and special arrangements have been put in place to safely accommodate those who require urgent Diagnostic, Ambulatory or Surgical care

- Ongoing collaboration with regional partners in our area at a new COVID-19 table to help work together as a team across all five hospitals in our region (Haliburton Highlands, Ross Memorial, Campbellford Memorial, NHH and Peterborough Regional) to ensure care for the most critically ill

With help from the NHH Foundation, NHH is also responding to the many generous offers of support from the community. “We thank everyone for the many calls and emails. We cannot respond to each and everyone one just now, but we are following up with as many as possible and have recommended the following tips to those who wish to help so that they may route this exceptional generosity into the hospital appropriately,” said Linda Davis.

- **Offers of equipment/supplies** – NHH is actively inviting and accepting unopened, CSA-approved personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, N95 respirators and procedure (surgical) masks from area businesses and individuals. Home-made surgical masks and scrubs are NOT accepted at this time, but a team has been formed to work with area partners to explore local production of essential items like face shields, gowns, as well as opportunities to reuse and even recycle existing supplies. All equipment donations must first be vetted through our Materials Management department. They cannot be dropped off without first confirming that they can be accepted. Contact Charity Meiklejohn at cmeiklejohn@nhh.ca
- **Offers of food** – we must decline, for infection control purposes. We recommend that you consider donating to local foodbanks OR reach out via the local (Facebook) Northumberland CAREMONGERING GROUP www.fornorthumberland.com
- **Offers of funds** – Please contact our NHH Foundation care of Rhonda Cunningham rcunningham@nhh.ca. Watch for further details in the NHH Foundation’s own community update coming out today (March 27, 2020) on their social feeds and website, www.nhhfoundation.ca
- **Offers of health human resources** – Please contact our Human Resources department care of careers@nhh.ca and note “COVID-19” and their credentials (eg. NP, RN) in the subject line
- **Other offers** – Please contact Public Affairs at jqillard@nhh.ca

“We are watching our colleagues in other countries, to our south, and bracing. None of us know what it will be like for Ontario or Northumberland, but we are all committed to doing our very best to prepare,” said Davis.

“The single most important thing we would like our community to do for us is to help us by helping Canada flatten the curve,” said Davis. “Simply put, we need to stop the spread of this infection. If you are not deemed essential, we ask that you stay home. It is everyone’s duty in this province to practice social distancing as strictly as possible.”

“By following the directions of our public health experts and taking pre-emptive steps together to slow the spread of this virus and ‘flatten the COVID-19’ curve, your hospital team is working to ensure that we will continue to be here for you and your family if and when you need us.”

Reminders:

Walk-in Community Mental Health Counselling phone support remains available

We know that many are feeling the mental strain of these most challenging times. Though temporarily closed to walk-in clients, the [Walk-In Community Mental Health Counselling clinic](#) is offering phone support for clients on regular walk-in days (Tuesdays from 8 am – 4pm and Thursdays from 10 am – 6pm). Call 1-905-377-7784 for walk-in support. Your call will be returned by walk-in staff by the end of the business day. As always, for individuals in mental health crisis:

- Call Four County Crisis at **1-705-745-6484** or **1-866-995-9933**,
- Reach out to the Community and Social Services Help Line by dialing **211**,
- Or, go to the closest Emergency Department

NHH COVID-19 Assessment Centre and online self-assessment tool

NHH continues to see a need for assessment and testing in the community, and we have been working hard to meet that need. NHH's COVID-19 Assessment Centre opened in the hospital's Ambulatory Care Clinic space on Saturday, March 14. Staffed by area physicians and hospital staff, the Assessment Centre team has assessed more than 462 individuals to date, including 206 virtual/phone assessments. Of those assessed, 66% have been swabbed. The Centre remains open daily from 8AM to 8PM. A new community assessment and testing service is also coming soon through Northumberland Paramedics' management team. Please help our Assessment teams help those who need us most. Not everyone needs to go to an assessment centre for testing. Help us conserve our laboratory and swabbing capacity. Self-assess before coming in with [the online tool on Ontario's COVID-19 website](#). Positive cases in our region are reported through the Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit website at: <https://www.hkpr.on.ca/covid-19-2/covid-19/>.

COVID-19 information sources

For the most recent provincial information on COVID-19, including symptoms to watch for and the status of cases in Ontario, see Ontario's dedicated COVID website: ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus or the local Public Health website at <https://www.hkpr.on.ca/>. NHH's website, www.nhh.ca, has links to these resources and more, and NHH is regularly updating answers to the most frequently asked questions on our dedicated COVID-19 webpage: NHH.ca/COVID-19. Please follow NHH and NHH Foundation on our social media feeds and share. Those without internet access or literacy, or with special needs, will need help to get information. Please support them as you are able by sharing essential information through word-of-mouth.

Media contact: Jennifer Gillard, Senior Director, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, 905-377-7757, jgillard@nhh.ca

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 or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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