

A Message from the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Norfolk Brant Burlington Hospital Presidents and CEOs

Hospitals working together to deliver care during pandemic

September 15, 2020

Hospitals in Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Norfolk, Brant and Burlington (HNHNBB region) are working together to ensure a stable system of health care throughout the pandemic and particularly during times when there may be a surge in cases of COVID-19.

In addition to work that continues in each hospital and with local partners, we are:

- Monitoring availability and procurement of supplies and equipment;
- Developing best practices for COVID 19 care based on advice from subject matter experts;
- Monitoring capacity for surgeries and procedures;
- Developing a flexible, scalable approach to potential future COVID care needs (Regional COVID-19 Model of Care Strategy).

A regional COVID-19 model of care strategy has been developed to provide a coordinated, evidence-based, and equitable approach to caring for COVID- 19-positive patients requiring hospital care in the HNHNBB region. The goal is to accommodate fluctuations in demand for COVID-19 care while minimizing any potential disruption of scheduled, regional, and community care across the region.

All hospital emergency departments in the region will support and provide care for persons under investigation for COVID-19. Patients who do not require hospitalization will be discharged and receive follow-up care as determined by their care team.

Patients who test positive and require hospitalization will be cared for at one of four designated hospitals providing consolidated acute COVID-19 care:

- Niagara Health (St. Catharines Site)
- Hamilton Health Sciences (Hamilton General Hospital)
- Joseph Brant Hospital
- St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

Norfolk General Hospital and Brant Community Healthcare System will continue to provide local COVID-19 care, and may transfer COVID-19 positive patients as needed to designated hospitals.



As part of the strategy, Joseph Brant Hospital's Pandemic Response Unit will be a regional resource to provide care for COVID-19 patients, should the need arise. The Pandemic Response Unit is an external all-season structure at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington. It is designed specifically to care for stable COVID-19 positive patients who have mild to moderate symptoms and require care and support that cannot be provided at home. For example, they may require oxygen therapy and medication, as well as ongoing monitoring of their symptoms and some personal support.

As admitted patients who are transferred to another hospital recover from COVID, they will either be discharged home with community supports as needed, or they will be transferred back to their community hospital for ongoing care as soon as possible. Although some patients may not be cared for in their community hospital, support for virtual visits and engagement of family/caregivers will be provided.

"It is our hope that transmission rates in our region remain low, fluctuations will be managed with current hospital capacity, and that the regional strategy will not need to be activated," says Rob MacIsaac, President and CEO, Hamilton Health Sciences, and Chair, Regional CEO Committee for Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Norfolk Brant Burlington. "However, creating this type of approach is critical to our pandemic response plans and to ensure that we are prepared for any potential surge in COVID cases."

"This collaboration demonstrates the strong partnerships among our hospitals and will serve as a foundation to address possible future health care crises in our region," says Rob MacIsaac. "As always, the safety of patients, staff and physicians is our main priority."

Moving forward, hospital leaders will continue to refine the plan, working with EMS and other partners and in coordination with Ontario Health (West Region).

"We have seen many times over how working in partnership strengthens the healthcare system's response to the pandemic," says Niagara Health President Lynn Guerriero. "The Niagara Health team has worked very hard to resume services that were paused due to COVID-19, and this week we expect to be at 100% of our pre-pandemic volumes. This partnership will ensure the hospitals in our larger region are ready to respond to additional COVID-19 activity while minimizing the impact on our regular operations."

Information for the public:

- Contact public health for information about COVID-19, including assessment centre locations and hours.
- **Anyone experiencing serious symptoms should call 9-1-1 or go to their nearest emergency department.**
- Continue to protect yourself and others by following public health advice including washing your hands frequently, wearing a mask when appropriate and getting a flu shot when available.

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