

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre is putting elements of its pandemic plan in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

(Thunder Bay, ON – Friday, March 13, 2020) Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre is activating its pandemic plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The health and safety of patients, their families, staff, professional staff, scientists, and volunteers is our utmost priority. The plan is in place for the safety of our community.

Preparedness efforts at the Hospital began long before COVID-19 appeared in Canada based on lessons-learned during other epidemics. Our experiences in the past with SARS in 2003, pandemic H1N1 in 2009 and Ebola in 2012 have taught us to plan early and anticipate escalation.

Although precautions are being taken, the risk of Ontarians contracting COVID-19 remains low. However, our Hospital has taken the following actions and continuously adapts to the evolving situation.

Incident Management Team

An Incident Management Team has been established to plan, implement and monitor COVID-19 activity specific to our Hospital. Dr. Stewart Kennedy is the Incident Manager.

Visitor Restrictions

To help prevent the risk or spread of COVID-19, visitors are not permitted at the Hospital, including the Transitional Care Unit at Hogarth Riverview Manor, effective immediately and until further notice. One care partner, designated by the patient, is welcome at all times. A care partner supports and participates in the care of the patient and is a valuable member of the care team.

COVID-19 Screening

Screening for COVID-19 at Hospital entrances will be in effect as of 20:00 today, Friday, March 13, 2020. Screening will follow Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care guidelines regarding symptoms and travel. Screening involves answering questions related to COVID-19 symptoms, as well as recent travel. All people will be screened before being allowed in.

In order to effectively manage screening, entrances will be designated as follows:

Four entrances will be available during day time hours between 06:00 and 20:00:

- West main entrance: accessible to all;
- East cafeteria: accessible to staff, specified learners and contractors only. Patients or care partners will be directed to other entrances;
- Emergency Department (ED): accessible to ED staff and ED patients/care partners only. All others will be directed to other entrances;
- Labour and Delivery (L&D): accessible to staff and L&D patients/care partners only. All others will be directed to other entrances.

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Two entrances will be available during overnight hours between 20:00 and 06:00:

- Emergency Department: accessible to all;
- Labour & Delivery: for staff and L&D patients/care partners only. All others will be directed to the ED entrance.

COVID-19 Assessment Centre

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre is establishing a COVID-19 Assessment Centre. The Assessment Centre is intended to enhance the protection of all patients, staff and community members. The Assessment Centre will be located on-site outside of the Hospital's Emergency Department. Because the Assessment Centre is a separate space, it should reduce the risk of infection spread and ease pressure on the Emergency Department. We anticipate the Assessment Centre will be operational by early next week.

To protect yourself and others from illness causing germs, please ensure you follow these everyday precautions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Practice proper respiratory etiquette (covering your nose/mouth when coughing or sneezing);
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
- Avoid contact with people who are ill;
- Stay home if you are experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness;
- It is recommended to get your flu shot if you haven't already as the flu virus is still circulating in the community;
- Seek medical care if required and disclose any recent travel history.

Additional measures may be implemented depending on how the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. We are committed to inform the community accordingly.

For more information about COVID-19, please contact TBDHU at (807) 625-5900 or toll free at 1-866-294-6630, or Telehealth toll free at 1-888-294-6630. More information is also available at www.tbdhu.com/coronavirus or <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-coronavirus-info-sheet-english-2020-02-18.pdf>.

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Members of the media are invited to speak with key members of the Hospital's Incident Management Team:

When: Friday, March 13 at 2:00 pm

Where: Room 2002A, Medical Centre Building, 984 Oliver Road

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Healthy Together

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, a 375-bed academic specialized acute care facility, is a national leader in Patient and Family Centred Care. As the only tertiary care provider in Northwestern Ontario, we provide comprehensive services to a population of over 250,000 residents in a region the size of France.

Effectively addressing the health care needs of patients and families has earned us both Innovation Awards and Leading Practice Designations.

As an academic health sciences centre, we teach the next generation of health care providers and advance medical research. Patients benefit from interprofessional teams of dedicated health care providers and access to leading-edge medical technology and clinical trials.