

For immediate release

January 17, 2017

Halton Healthcare hospitals respond to increased patient activity

Halton Healthcare hospitals – Oakville Trafalgar Memorial, Milton District and Georgetown – have seen a significant increase in the number of patients coming into their emergency departments and being admitted to hospital over the past month. This increase, in part, is being attributed to the level of flu activity in the province and is impacting all hospitals in the Greater Toronto Area and beyond.

The Ministry of Health & Long Term Care has advised that the current provincial status of influenza activity in the province is currently at level Orange, the second highest rating. The provincial status is based on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's review of a number of influenza activity indicators. The general notification posted on their website (<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/flu/surveillance.aspx#orange>) states that influenza activity is at elevated seasonal levels and may be reaching peak levels this week. It also notes that the entire healthcare system, including hospitals, will feel the impact.

As demonstrated by the number of respiratory outbreaks in retirement homes and long term care facilities in Halton this has been a particularly virulent flu season. As of January 16, 2017 Halton Region had declared nineteen respiratory outbreaks in these facilities. The elderly and those with medical conditions are especially vulnerable to the flu, which affects them more severely and often results in hospitalization.

A seasonal increase is **expected** at this time of year and hospitals, including Halton Healthcare's, develop contingency plans to address this situation. "Halton Healthcare has opened additional beds at all three hospitals to address the surge and help alleviate the pressure," says Sylvia

Rodgers, Senior Vice-President Clinical Services & Chief Nursing Executive. “The number of patients arriving at Emergency at our three hospitals is much higher this season compared to the corresponding months last year.. We are also experiencing both an increase in severity of illness and increased ambulance traffic. The increase in ED volumes and the number of admitted patients means that wait times in the Emergency Department may be longer than usual

Like most of the province, Halton Healthcare is also experiencing a growth in the number of patients who are occupying a hospital bed but no longer require acute hospital care. These patients are referred to as Alternate Level of Care (ALC) and while there are many reasons why these patients remain in hospital a shortage of long-term care home spaces is a significant challenge in our communities.

Emergency Departments are for urgent, immediate and unscheduled healthcare services and one of several choices to receive the care that you need depending upon the severity and urgency of your condition. If your health condition is not urgent, patients should consider other options before going to the ED, including a visit to your family doctor, nurse practitioner or a walk-in clinic. If you are unsure if a trip to the ED is required, you can call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0007.

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About Halton Healthcare:

Halton Healthcare is a healthcare organization comprised of three community hospitals - Georgetown Hospital, Milton District Hospital and Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. Together these hospitals provide healthcare services to more than 325,000 residents in the communities of Halton Hills, Milton, and Oakville. Halton Healthcare hospitals have been recognized for their best practices in a number of patient safety and patient care initiatives. For more information, visit www.haltonhealthcare.com. Follow us on Twitter @[HaltonHlthcare](https://twitter.com/HaltonHlthcare).

Media Contact:

Trish Carlton
Director, Communications and Public Affairs
tcarlton@haltonhealthcare.com
905-845-2571 x4668