

**For Immediate Release:****November 22, 2022**

**Children's Hospital reduces surgical activity to maintain critical care capacity (London, Ontario)** – As Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC) continues to navigate a significant surge in emergent patient health care volumes, the difficult decision was made to reduce surgical activity as of late last week. As the situation evolves, we will continue to evaluate and adjust operational decisions accordingly.

Occupancy levels for inpatient beds at Children's Hospital are currently sitting at 115 per cent, exceeding our experience at the height of the pandemic. Daily visits to the Emergency Department are 80 per cent higher than normal with wait times averaging six to eight hours.

The hospital has responded by extending inpatient capacity by 117 per cent, increasing critical care capacity by 150 per cent with the support of the Ministry of Health, leveraging paediatric ambulatory clinic spaces to relieve pressure on the Children's Hospital ED for lower acuity patients, establishing a virtual urgent care clinic to support patients while at home, and transitioning children over the age of 14 to the adult Intensive Care Unit (ICU) when appropriate and safe to do so.

While these strategies are helping to manage growing volumes and acuity pressures, further action is required to sustain hospital resources as our health care teams are faced with an influx of patients from the region, growing system pressures in the province, and continued health human resources challenges. Reducing surgical activity will allow health care teams to prioritize urgent and time-sensitive surgeries while managing the growing number of patients admitted to Critical Care units and inpatient areas.

“This is an extremely difficult decision and one that I wish we didn’t have to make,” said Nash Syed, President of Children’s Hospital. “The decision to reduce surgical activity is necessary to ensure our teams are able to meet critical care and emergency needs. To the parents and family members of paediatric patients, I want to assure you that our health care teams will do everything they can to reschedule surgeries in a timely manner.”

Administrative teams will be contacting families whose scheduled procedures will be affected. Although this is a very challenging time, we want to thank the community for their continued support and understanding.

### **How our community can help**

As we experience a sudden surge in viruses and respiratory illnesses in our community, including COVID-19, we encourage everyone to consider the following:

- Stay up-to-date with vaccinations (COVID-19 and flu)
- Screen daily for respiratory symptoms
- Stay home when sick
- Wash hands regularly and clean high-touch surfaces regularly
- Follow Public Health’s recommendation to wear a mask while in a public setting indoors

When layered, these protective measures can help curb transmission of respiratory viruses, reduce the severity of illness, and protect ourselves, while also safeguarding health care system capacity.

### **About London Health Sciences Centre**

With roots going back a century and a half, London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC), is an award-winning, research-intensive acute tertiary and quaternary teaching hospital, one of only 14 such hospitals in Ontario. LHSC is also home to Children’s Hospital, one of just four acute tertiary care paediatric hospitals in the province. Our unique place in the health system positions us well to inform and advise on provincial, national and international health policy. We are the cornerstone of care for many specialized programs and services in Western Ontario. And, as a major provider of emergency care

and through our community hospital mission, we also care for the more than 400,000 people who call London home as well as many in surrounding communities. With Ontario's health system continuing its transformation, LHSC has an opportunity to inform it and to place itself at the locus of the regionalized health system by virtue of its size, specialized capabilities, research and education capacity and its current regional footprint. LHSC's formal relationship and strong bond with Western University provide a mechanism for collaboration to enable the delivery of high-quality care through a process of continuous learning and research. At its core, the affiliation is a reciprocal relationship that leverages the learning, teaching and care environments of both Western University and LHSC. LHSC is a 15,000 person strong team of physicians, staff and volunteers – collaborators, innovators and pioneers, meeting the care needs of those we serve and charting a course for the future.

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