

COVID-19 Outbreaks at University Hospital – November 2020

Resources and Frequently Asked Questions – For communicating with patients, caregivers and family members

For Units where outbreak has been declared

Current as of December 4, 2020

RESOURCES

Direct patients to LHSC's website for the most current information:

www.lhsc.on.ca/coronavirus. This includes an online Family Information and Support Centre with resources, coping strategies and other support for patients and families.

The most current information about the COVID-19 Outbreak is available here:

<https://www.lhsc.on.ca/coronavirus/covid-19-outbreak-information>.

As needed, refer patients to LHSC's Patient Relations Office (519-685-8500 ext. 52036). They can facilitate compliments, complaints and conflicts. Contacting Patient Relations is the patient's choice and is optional.

If the patient, family member or caregiver mentions calling the news media, please contact your leader immediately.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where have outbreaks been declared at University Hospital?

Unit level outbreaks have been declared at University Hospital in the following areas:

- 4IP General Medicine
- 6IP Acute/Decant Medicine, 9IP Sub-Acute Medicine and 10IP Palliative Care/Sub-Acute Medicine
- 4TU Multi-Organ Transplant Unit and 6IP Cardiovascular Surgery

The current total number of patient and staff/physician cases of COVID-19 are provided on LHSC's website.

How are outbreaks declared?

Unit-level outbreaks for COVID-19 are declared, in partnership with the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU), as soon as there are two or more confirmed positive cases among patients or staff that could have possibly been acquired on an inpatient unit. After 14 days with no new cases, the unit level outbreak is declared over in consultation with the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

What is LHSC doing to address the outbreaks?

LHSC is taking a number of steps in partnership with the Middlesex-London Health Unit to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, and protect everyone in our hospital and community.

The actions being taken include:

- Processes put in place to ensure safe care within the affected units, discharges to other units are restricted, and existing patients are actively assessed.
- Enhanced equipment and environmental cleaning measures.
- Contact tracing of affected staff and patients.
- Admission COVID-19 testing for all patients admitted to LHSC (including University and Victoria Hospitals).
- Masking for all adult inpatients at University and Victoria Hospitals, in addition to existing universal masking protocols for staff and physicians.
- Enhanced surveillance COVID-19 testing for all staff and physicians who provide inpatient clinical care at University Hospital.
- Work quarantine for appropriate staff such that they are not in close contact with anyone in the community.
- Opening additional break room spaces for staff and physicians, and limiting the movement of staff and physicians between units and hospitals.
- LHSC is postponing all non-urgent and non-emergent surgeries and procedures at University Hospital.
- Ambulatory or outpatient activity at University Hospital is reduced to only urgent and emergent appointments, procedures and diagnostic services.
- When possible, all other clinic appointments will be rescheduled as virtual appointments.
- Clinical research visits at University Hospital is limited to essential only.

What does this mean for patients?

Please know that we are doing everything in our power to ensure your health and safety. We want to assure you that this remains a safe place for you to receive care. As part of the measures being taken, all patients and staff on the units are being tested for COVID-19 and are required to wear a mask (we will provide masks for patients). We recognize that that changes may be causing you to feel worried and uncertain. This is an evolving situation and you will be kept informed of changes as they happen. Your care is very important to us and your safety remains our top priority.

What does this mean for staff on work quarantine?

University Hospital staff and physicians from affected areas have been assigned to a geographic area, where they will work for the duration of the outbreak. Cohorting of staff (always working with the same team) is regularly used in outbreak management in order to limit potential exposures of patients who currently are not COVID-19 positive.

Why are these outbreaks occurring?

The cause of the source of outbreaks varies and is not always identifiable. Unfortunately, there is an increase in community cases so it naturally follows that the hospital would also experience an increase in cases.

Are new patients being admitted to the units where outbreaks have been declared?

No, any new non-COVID-19 medicine patients will be admitted to an alternative appropriate unit at Victoria Hospital.

Will LHSC need to cancel surgeries or reduce other clinical service because of the outbreak?

LHSC remains open and is a safe place to seek and receive care. However, the following changes to services are currently taking place:

- All non-urgent and non-emergent surgeries and procedures at University Hospital are being postponed.
- Ambulatory or outpatient activity at University Hospital is reduced to only urgent and emergent appointments, procedures and diagnostic services.
- When possible, all other clinic appointments will be rescheduled as virtual appointments.

- Clinical research visits at University Hospital is limited to essential only.

Any patient whose appointment or procedure is impacted by the outbreaks will receive **direct** communication from their health-care team to discuss their ongoing care plan.

Is the hospital safe?

Please rest assured that the hospital remains safe for those receiving care. We are doing everything in our power to ensure your health and safety. A number of measures are being taken at the unit level and across the hospitals to keep people safe and limit the outbreak. We know this is a really challenging time and things are changing quickly. We sincerely thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we work through this together. Please don't hesitate to ask questions or share your concerns with us. Patients can choose to contact a Patient Relations Specialist if they have concerns that are not addressed by their care team at 519-685-8500 ext. 52036.

Are visitors allowed at the hospital?

LHSC is temporarily limiting family/caregiver presence and other visitation in order to maintain a safe environment during the pandemic. At this time, the Middlesex-London Health Unit has issued a directive that temporarily prevents all visitation to patients at University Hospital. The only exception is for patients who are actively dying. We recognize this may be very challenging for you during an uncertain time, and you may feel isolated from loved ones.

The hospital supports the use of technology to connect with your loved ones through virtual options, like Skype, FaceTime, WebEx or telephone calls. LHSC has increased our guest Wi-Fi capacity and continues to offer this service for free to patients.

Is the hospital implementing physical distancing measures?

The hospital continues to put physical distancing measures in place and closely follow procedures to prevent infection. We are following the directives from the Ministry of Health and guidance from public health. LHSC has opened additional break room spaces for staff and physicians, and is limiting the movement of staff and physicians between units and hospitals.

I'm very worried about my health and safety. What should I do?

We recognize that these changes may be causing you to experience uncertainty and

worry. Please know your care is important to us and your safety is our top priority. Please let us know at any time if you have questions or concerns. Patients can choose to contact a Patient Relations Specialist if they have concerns that are not addressed by their care team at 519-685-8500 ext. 52036.

I've spoken with my care team and I'm unhappy about my care. Who should I contact?

If you would like to discuss concerns about your care, you can contact a Patient Relations Specialist at 519-685-8500 ext. 52036.

Where can I find more information about the outbreak?

We will regularly keep you updated about changes during your stay with us. You, or your family, can visit the website at www.lhsc.on.ca/coronavirus for current updates, including information about the outbreak.

What if I am involved in a clinical research study?

The hospital's research institute, Lawson Health Research Institute, is in Phase 3 of research resumption with staff numbers at a maximum 60% on-site occupancy while still adhering to health and safety measures. At this time, research participation visits at University Hospital have been limited to essential only. If you are involved in a study, that team will contact you directly about any changes. They are also offering remote appointments when possible.

For patients asking about the number of positive COVID-19 patients on the unit

Are there patients on this unit that have COVID-19?

There has been a COVID-19 outbreak declared on this Unit. Due to patient privacy, I cannot confirm the numbers on our unit or other details of those patients. LHSC is posting the total number of COVID-19 cases related to outbreaks at University Hospital on their website. I can tell you that there are several control measures in place to separate patients and reduce transmission.

Are the same staff and physicians providing care for positive COVID-19 patients and patients who do not have COVID-19?

Both patients and their care teams are cohorted together. This means that staff and physicians will not regularly go from caring for a COVID-19 patient to caring for someone who does not have COVID-19. If staff and physicians are required to care for



COVID-19 and other patients, they remove their PPE and put on clean PPE in between every patient in order to reduce transmission. This helps protect patients as well as staff and physicians.

How are you making sure positive patients are separated from others?

We have a designated “red zone” for patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 or where it is suspected. They are kept separate from patients in the “green zone” where we have no COVID-19 cases. We use isolation rooms for patients who have tested positive. All of our patients whether in a red or green zone are on droplet and contact precautions as an additional safety measure.

**Only if needed:*

If volumes were to increase to the point that we were not able to separate patients in the two zones, patients would be separated by physical space and curtains, along with other measures such as droplet and contact precautions.