



News Release

Tuesday, November 3, 2009

The Scarborough Hospital well prepared for H1N1

Extra precautions in place to keep patients, visitors and staff safe

Extensive precautions to prevent the transmission of H1N1 at The Scarborough Hospital are helping ensure that both the General and Birchmount campuses are safe for patients, visitors and staff.

“Patients who have scheduled appointments or procedures should know that the hospital is taking every reasonable precaution,” says Dr. John Wright, President and CEO. “H1N1 is a community-based virus, and people are probably safer here than in other places in the community.”

As the hospital with the highest rate of hand hygiene compliance in Ontario, The Scarborough Hospital was already well prepared for H1N1—experts maintain that next to vaccination, proper hand hygiene offers the best protection from the virus. Visitors and staff are encouraged to use the hand sanitizing stations located throughout the hospital.

Rigorous cleaning procedures that were enhanced last year to protect patients from the spread of infections such as *C. difficile*, MRSA and VRE also help ensure a reduced risk of H1N1 transmission.

“Many of our staff worked through SARS and other outbreaks, and we have learned important lessons that are paying off today,” says Dr. Wright. “Our community is fortunate to have a hospital with this level of experience, and I think we’re seeing that expertise put into practice with our proactive H1N1 response.”

New measures being undertaken at The Scarborough Hospital include:

- All patients at our Emergency Departments at both campuses are being screened for flu-like symptoms, asked to sanitize their hands, and provided with procedural masks as appropriate before entering.
- A new visitor’s policy limits admitted patients to two visitors per day, and Emergency patients to one visitor.
- Signage at all entrances asks visitors to avoid entering the hospital if they have flu-like symptoms.
- Providing H1N1 vaccinations for staff, physicians and volunteers has been made a high priority, with both centralized clinics and roving vaccination carts being used to improve access to the vaccine.
- As a proactive measure, an Emergency Operations Centre was partially activated to allow the hospital to closely monitor Emergency Department volumes, patient admissions and staffing complements to ensure the optimal level of patient care is maintained.

The Scarborough Hospital reminds the community that we do not do routine testing for H1N1, and we are unable to administer the vaccine to the general public. Toronto Public Health has set up H1N1 influenza vaccination clinics in the community. For more information about these clinics, their locations and hours of operation, please visit www.toronto.ca/health.

FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of influenza include:

- fever (over 38 degrees Celsius or 100 degrees Fahrenheit)
- worsening cough
- sore throat
- joint pain or muscle ache
- fatigue or weakness
- headache

If you have a fever and cough AND one or more of the other symptoms, you probably have influenza-like illness and should stay home, self-isolated from other family members.

If you believe you have the flu, please contact your family doctor or call TeleHealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000. If your symptoms become severe (such as difficulty breathing), please call 911 or visit the Emergency Department.

More information about H1N1, and the measures TSH has in place to deal with the virus, is available on our website at www.tsh.to.

For more information:

Dave Bourne
Manager, Corporate Communications
The Scarborough Hospital
416-438-2911 ext. 6836
dbourne@tsh.to