



January 4, 2021

COVID-19 Care Expands to Pandemic Response Unit at Joseph Brant Hospital

Intense pressures on hospitals providing COVID care across the region have prompted activation of the Pandemic Response Unit (PRU) located at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington.

The Pandemic Response Unit is part of a regional strategy developed by hospitals across Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant and Burlington (HNHBB) to meet the demand for COVID-19 care and help minimize potential disruptions to scheduled, regional, and community care, as much as possible. The regional strategy is being led by the HNHBB Hospital Incident Management Structure (IMS) team, which includes representation from all regional hospitals.

“Our healthcare system is being stretched to its limits,” says Rob MacIsaac, President and CEO, Hamilton Health Sciences and IMS co-chair. “Opening the Pandemic Response Unit is a necessary step in our continued efforts to preserve critical hospital capacity for the sickest patients. All of the region’s hospitals are working closely together to ensure that care can be delivered safely with limited disruption to patients.”

Acute COVID-19 care continues to be provided by four hospitals across the region:

- Hamilton Health Sciences
- Joseph Brant Hospital
- Niagara Health
- St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton.

Starting this week, hospital teams providing acute COVID-19 care will be able to transfer patients to the Pandemic Response Unit to support the next stage of their care, as appropriate. Staff and physicians will work closely with patients, their families and the team at JBH to support care plan discussions. The health care team working in the PRU will provide care for patients whose conditions are stable, but require medical support before they are ready to return home.

“The Pandemic Response Unit was built to care for stable COVID-19 patients who require care that cannot be provided at home, such as oxygen therapy and medication, as well as ongoing monitoring of their symptoms and some personal support,” says Dr. Ian Preyra, Chief of Staff at Joseph Brant Hospital. “Transitioning these patients to the PRU will ensure they receive the care and support they need to complete their recovery in an inpatient unit designed specifically to provide this type of COVID-19 care before returning to their home communities.”

“As we see increased prevalence of COVID-19 in our communities, so too are the numbers of COVID-positive patients in our hospitals rising,” says Dr. Cheryl Williams, Executive Vice President Clinical Operations and Chief Nursing Executive, St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton. “The Pandemic Response Unit adds one more important resource for our hospitals to provide safe care for patients during a time of increasing pressures.”

“The opening of the Pandemic Response Unit is a sober reminder that our healthcare system is under intense pressure and that we must continue to follow public health guidance to reduce transmission of the virus,” says Lynn Guerriero, President, Niagara Health and IMS Co-Chair. “These are challenging times for patients, their families, and our hospital teams and we are grateful to everyone for their support as we work together to respond to the pandemic.”

Members of the HNHBB IMS team will continue to collaborate to monitor hospital care capacity and respond to the pandemic.

Information for the public:

- Go to your local Public Health website for information about COVID-19, including testing and assessment centre locations, hours and booking a test.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, or have been a close contact of someone with COVID-19, self-isolate and get tested.
- Anyone experiencing serious symptoms should call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency department.
- Continue to protect yourself and others by following public health advice including washing your hands frequently, wearing a mask and appropriate physical distancing.

Link for more information about the [Pandemic Response Unit](#).