

Headwaters Assessment Centre preparing for increased COVID-19 testing

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With Ontario reporting high numbers of new COVID-19 cases, reaching an all-time high of 700 new cases on Monday (Sept. 28), assessment centres are preparing on how to cope with a new wave of residents requiring testing.

Headwaters Health Care Centre has been following the advice and guidelines set by the Ministry of Health regarding their assessment centre, and what changes have needed to be made in order to prioritize testing individuals in a safe manner.

Residents are being asked to visit the Assessment Centre if they are showing COVID-19 symptoms, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive in their area, are a resident or employee where there has been an outbreak, or are eligible for testing as part of a targeted testing initiative.

"As we have seen time and time again during this pandemic, situations can change rapidly and we all need to be able to adapt," said Kim Delahunt, President and CEO, Headwaters Health Care Centre. "We encourage people with symptoms to come to our Assessment Centre and to stay informed about the recommendations from Public Health and the Ontario Ministry of Health."

Peter Varga, Vice President of Patient Services and Chief Nursing Executive stated that the daily number of residents seeking the COVID-19 tests has increased from 200 people previously, to between 350 and 400 people in the past week.

"The lineups are long and we have had instances when we have had to close the lineup early, or just temporarily while we complete our testing. Our numbers continue to fluctuate. Our staff have been wonderful and are doing their best," he said. "We have also hired additional staff to manage the demand. We do ask that people are patient as they wait in line and reconsider their need for a test is based on the most recent updates from the Province."

The Assessment Centre has been handling as many people as they can while following the changes in the guidelines, which were set on Sept. 25, but their lineups continue to grow.

Premier Doug Ford claimed this week that Ontario has entered a second wave of coronavirus and that hospitals and assessment centres are being prepped to deal with more cases.

"Our team is working along with our community partners including Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health to plan for a second wave. Our enhanced infection and prevention control measures continue. These include screening people at hospital entrances, enhanced high touch area cleaning and wearing masks inside the hospital," Varga explained. "We are now up to pre-COVID-19 activity in our hospital ramp-up of services and procedures. Our team is also working on addressing the waitlists, which will take several months to complete. Our Emergency Department visits have also risen to pre-COVID-19 volumes."

Now at the beginning of October and flu season upon us, the team at Headwaters is encouraging residents to seek their family doctors or emergency medical care if their issue is urgent, and highly encourage everyone to get the flu shot.

"Our messages are consistent. We encourage people to keep following public health guidelines, wear a mask or face covering, wash their hands regularly, maintain physical distance and also contain your social circle. Please get your flu shot. We all need to do our part to help flatten the curve," he said. "We have been working hard each and every day to fight the coronavirus to ensure that patients, essential visitors and staff are safe at Headwaters and those who require our services are able to receive the care they need."

He added, "Our collaboration with our community partners has been critical in all our activities as we plan to manage the second

wave.?

The Headwaters COVID-19 Assessment Centre is currently not winterized, so the team is preparing on moving the centre to a location better capable to handle the upcoming cold weather months. More information regarding the Assessment Centre and updates will be available in the next weeks.

For more information, please visit headwatershealth.ca.