

Osler helping community get the best care in the right place over holidays

With the holidays right around the corner, William Osler Health System, like most Ontario hospitals, is already seeing a growing number of people seeking care in its emergency departments (ED) at Brampton Civic Hospital and Etobicoke General Hospital. Similar to past years, we have been working with our clinical teams, hospital leaders and community partners to plan for this year's expected seasonal surge and effectively manage higher than normal patient volumes," said Osler's Interim Executive Vice President of Clinical Services Kiki Ferrari. "We begin our efforts many months in advance, and we continue to work with our health care partners across the Central West region to raise awareness of health care options in the community in addition to bringing in extra staff to ensure that patients and families receive safe, timely, high quality care in our emergency departments over the holidays." A holiday surge is caused by high demand and activity due to a number of factors, such as reduced hours of operation for doctor's offices and walk-in clinics, less availability of community resources, higher rates of health incidents caused by activities of the holiday season and an increase in seasonal flu cases. All of these factors cause the community to rely more heavily on hospital emergency departments.

To help the community better understand where they might be able to seek care for less complex conditions, Osler has taken to its website to share tips and information. In addition to viewing a video explaining how the ED works, Osler website visitors can find out more about alternatives to the ED, how to prepare in case medical care is needed over the holidays, and the symptoms that should prompt patients to go directly to the ED. This information is also being shared through Osler social media channels including Twitter (@OslerHealth) and its Facebook page. Osler's ED Patient Experience Program will play a critical role in helping improve comfort, enhance communication and ensure an overall positive experience for patients and families while they are in the emergency department. As part of this program, Patient Experience staff will be in the ED daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and will help to:

- Provide updates on wait times;
- Alert the clinical team if a patient begins to feel worse;
- Enhance patient comfort with a blanket or other resources; and
- Provide activities for children such as colouring sheets or small toys.

People should go to their ED in the following cases:

- Pains or tightness in the chest;
- Fractures or broken bones;
- Wounds that may need stitches;
- Severe pain;
- Shortness of breath;
- Sudden, severe headaches, vision problems, sudden weakness, numbness and/or tingling in the face, arm or leg, trouble speaking, or dizziness;
- If your child is vomiting, has diarrhea and won't eat or drink;
- When a baby younger than six months has a fever more than 37.9 degrees C or 100 degrees F.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if the health issue is life-threatening or you're not sure.

People may not need the ED:

- For x-rays, laboratory testing or treatment, they may visit an urgent care centre or a walk-in clinic that offers these services;
- For minor problems like coughs and colds, minor injuries, and more long-standing or chronic medical problems, They can get care at a family care provider's office, an urgent care centre or a walk-in clinic.

And if you're not sure, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

To find out more about how to prepare for any medical care over the holidays, go to www.williamoslerhs.ca