

Osler helping community prepare for care this holiday season

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, as well as in its Urgent Care Centre at Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness.

Like previous years, Osler's team and community partners have been working diligently to effectively manage the expected increase in volume of patients seeking care in our hospitals during the holiday season, says Osler's Interim Executive Vice President of Clinical Services Kiki Ferrari. Our planning efforts began many months ago and are critical in ensuring patients and families receive timely, quality care across all Osler sites.

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 their 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, Twitter (@OslerHealth) and Facebook pages to share tips and information for care over the holidays. In addition to viewing a video explaining how the ED works, Osler website and social media 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. People should go to the Emergency Department if they are experiencing chest or abdominal pain, shortness of breath, dizziness or fainting, numbness or weakness in arms or hands, major trauma, mental health issues fever in infants three months and younger, overdose or poisoning, pregnancy-related emergencies, seizures, stroke symptoms or any serious condition that appears to be getting worse.

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

You may not need the Emergency Department. For x-rays, laboratory testing or treatment, you can visit an urgent care centre or a walk-in clinic offering these services.

For minor problems like coughs and colds, minor injuries and more long-standing or chronic medical problems, care is available at your family care provider's office, an urgent care centre or a walk-in clinic.

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

Peel Memorial's Urgent Care Centre (UCC) also serves as a convenient alternative to Brampton Civic Hospital's Emergency Department. Staffed by Osler's emergency-trained physicians and clinical staff, equipped with high-tech diagnostics, and ready to handle most non-life-threatening illnesses and injuries, the UCC treats conditions like sprains, broken bones, cuts needing stitches, allergic reactions, infections, and asthma attacks. No referral or appointment is needed. To learn more, [click here](#).

Patients are encouraged to visit www.williamoslerhs.ca to learn more about how to prepare for any medical care over the holidays and www.centralwesthealthline.ca to find out more about the community's health care options.