

News Release

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Bluewater Health Prepares for Busy Holiday Season

Things to consider to avoid Emergency Department visits and waits

SARNIA & PETROLIA – December 10, 2018 – The holiday season brings increased activity to hospitals – most notably in the Emergency Departments (ED). The busyness over the holidays is in part due to the flu season that grips the community and potentially limited holiday hours at health system partners like doctors' offices, walk-in clinics and others. During the holidays, Bluewater Health can see over 300 patients per day in the Sarnia and Petrolia Emergency Departments, approximately twice the normal daily volumes.

Bluewater Health has strategies within the hospital and with its partners to prepare for the increased number of people needing care but it is just as important for the community members to prepare as well.

“Always call 911 right away if you or someone close to you is experiencing chest pain, stroke symptoms or an acute medical emergency,” says Dr. Robert Hislop, Medical Director Emergency Medicine, “The ED is here for the sickest people in our community and we provide treatment of urgent illnesses and injuries in Sarnia and Petrolia 24 hours per day. That said, there are a few things people can do ahead of the holidays to care for themselves and prevent the need for an unwanted hospital visit over the holidays.”

Holiday Healthcare Preparation

1. Understand alternatives to the Emergency Department for non-emergency care: Know the holiday hours of your family doctor's office and the walk-in clinics. Find the health care services and hours of operation at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/health-care-ontario> or at www.ErieStClairHealthline.ca.
2. Get your flu shot to protect yourself and those around you.
3. Make sure to refill your medication prescriptions before the holidays. If you happen to run out, contact your pharmacist to see if they can help you until you can see your primary care provider.
4. Reach out to agencies or organizations you regularly associate with (example: Canadian Mental Health Association, Alzheimer's Society, etc.) to see what services are available during the holidays if you need them.
5. Are you a caregiver? Respite care, which is short term accommodation and temporary relief for those who are caring for a family member or loved one, may be available if needed. Call Home and Community Care, ESC LHIN at 1-888-447-4468 to learn more.
6. Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential service that provides health advice or information. A Registered Nurse will take your call 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-866-797-0000.

For mental health concerns over the holidays, there are a number of organizations that are prepared for urgent needs.

- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) 519-337-5411 or call the Crisis Line at 519-336-3445 or 1-800-307-4319
- St. Clair Child and Youth (519) 337-3701
- Family Counselling Centre 519-336-0120 or call the Distress line (24 hours) at 519-336-3000 or 1-888-DISTRES (1-888-347-8737)
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
- Withdrawal Management Services 519-332-HOPE (4673)
- Home and Community Care, ESC LHIN 519-337-1000 or 1-888-447-4468

- Canadian Red Cross 519-332-6380
- Lambton Elderly Outreach (LEO) (519) 845-1353
- Lambton Public Health 519-383-8331
- Inn of the Good Shepherd (519) 344-1746
- The Haven (519) 336-5941
- The Good Shepherds Lodge (519) 344-1679
- Salvation Army (519) 337-3011

Bluewater Health extends its wishes to the Sarnia-Lambton community for a healthy, safe and happy holiday season.

Bluewater Health, with locations in Sarnia and Petrolia, cares for the residents of Sarnia-Lambton. With close to 2,500 staff, Professional Staff and volunteers, Bluewater Health provides an array of specialized acute, complex continuing care, allied health and ambulatory care services. Bluewater Health's Mission is: *We create exemplary healthcare experiences with patients and families every time.* For more information about Bluewater Health, visit www.bluewaterhealth.ca or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube.

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