

Renfrew County Residents Have Multiple Options For Medical Care Depending On Circumstances And Severity Of Symptoms

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PEMBROKE - As Renfrew County hospitals gradually and safely return to pre-COVID service levels, residents are reminded that, while emergency departments are open and ready to deal with urgent health care needs, there are alternative care options for minor medical issues, COVID testing and other circumstances better suited to primary care providers.

"Many of the region's family physician and nurse practitioner offices continue to see patients either in person or virtually, so it's important in a non-urgent situation for residents to first connect with their primary care giver, if they have one, as a first course of action," said Dr. Tom Hurley, Chief of Staff at the Pembroke Regional Hospital.

Those residents who don't have a family physician or those whose primary care giver cannot be reached, are encouraged to contact the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (RCVTAC) by calling 1-844-727-6404 or visiting www.rcvtac.ca for more information.

The RCVTAC is accessible 24/7 for residents who have non-life-threatening health issues, and is covered by OHIP with a valid health card, Dr. Hurley said.

Some examples of issues that can be addressed by contacting the Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre include:

- COVID-19 testing
- Minor burns or injuries
- Coughs, colds and sore throats
- Fever or flu-like symptoms
- Mild asthma
- Investigation of chronic problems
- Sprains and strains
- Ear infections
- Skin irritations (rashes)
- Prescription renewals

Dr. Hurley said that the Pembroke Regional Hospital's Emergency Department is currently operating at approximately 75% of its pre-COVID service levels, with an average of 60-80 patients per day. He notes that many of those coming to the Emergency Department are arriving with symptoms and conditions that are falling into the more serious classifications.

"Time is of the essence when treating many serious medical conditions so now is not the time to ignore symptoms or hesitate if you feel it's an emergency. A delay in seeking care could have a lasting impact on your outcome, with patients potentially suffering serious complications if they don't seek timely care," said Dr. Tatiana Jilkina, Chief of Emergency at PRH.

With COVID-19 still dominating the news, Dr. Jilkina said it can be easy to forget that heart attacks, strokes and all kinds of other medical emergencies are still happening every day. And in the case of major strokes or heart attacks, for example, patients need to be treated within a few hours of developing symptoms in order to avoid permanent damage, disability or death.

"All hospitals in Renfrew County have taken every precaution to not only reduce the spread of COVID-19 but also to ensure the health and safety of our patients and staff. If patients are experiencing symptoms that, pre-COVID, would have brought them to the Emergency Department, then the Emergency Department or a call to 9-1-1 should still be their number one choice," Dr. Jilkina said.

In all of the region's hospitals, patients are screened upon entry and those presenting with COVID-19 symptoms are rapidly segregated and provided with appropriate protective equipment such as masks. As a result, the risk of contracting COVID-19 through an emergency department visit is minimal.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

**Carolyn Levesque, Public Affairs and Communications Coordinator
Pembroke Regional Hospital
(613) 732-3675, extension 6165 / carolyn.levesque@prh.email**