

## Looking Forward to a Healthier 2025 and Connecting with You

January 28, 2025

As I'm writing this blog, our hospital is dealing with a surge of patients, many sick with more than one illness --in fact, 19 different respiratory and gastro pathogens (or germs/bugs) have been identified by our lab and an outbreak in two of our units, requiring 70 patients to be isolated.

Timmins and District Hospital (TADH) has now moved to a yellow (medium) risk status which requires staff and visitors to mask (the last time we were at a yellow risk status was November 2023). We're also limiting the number of visitors, to one Designated Care Partner per visitation, with two assigned by each patient.

As part ensuring transparent and timely communications at TADH, we've created an [Outbreak Page](#) on our website which lists current restrictions to protect patients, visitors, staff, physicians and contractors.

What's going on?

Respiratory illness season, which includes illnesses like influenza A, COVID and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), is well underway in the communities served by TADH, the region, and other parts of the province as well.

At the end of 2024 and beginning of this year, we have seen an unprecedented numbers of patients in our emergency department and much higher rates of admitted patients throughout the hospital.

I'm tremendously proud of how our team has risen to meet these ongoing challenges, which for some means forgoing time with their families to care for patients. Staff and physicians are also experiencing infectious illness, which requires isolation and time off. I am so grateful for the work they do to care for patients at this challenging time. Please be kind to them – they deserve our gratitude.

To cope with this influx, we have dozens of strategies in place both in the emerge and other areas of the hospital, to try to maximize the resources we have, everything from bench marking and process flow mapping, to hiring additional staff such as social workers and nurses, to creating a pediatric clinic to divert some patients from the emerge. (We'll be sharing some news shortly on a new program that is helping to increase our hospital's capacity and get people the help they need to recover at home.)

As this increase in illness in communities continues, it might mean you may have to wait longer than normal for care in our emergency department. Please remember the emerge is

not like a clinic, where people are seen by order of arrival, rather they are triaged, so that the sickest are seen the quickest. If you're ever wondering how long the wait to be seen is, please check out the [ER Wait Times page](#) of our website – the wait times can vary throughout the day, and are updated every 15 minutes.

At this time of year, we all need to be vigilant in applying lessons learned during the pandemic including rigorous handwashing, staying home when sick, staying up to date on vaccinations, and masking when needed. Other ways to protect yourself and loved ones is to avoid large gatherings during peak respiratory illness season, as much as you are able.

If you are ill with a non-life-threatening illness, please know there may be alternatives to consider other than visiting our busy emergency department, including:

- **Accessing the North East Region Virtual Care Clinic**, a free online service. To schedule an appointment, visit <https://www.nevirtualcare.ca/>.
- **Connecting with a registered nurse day or night for free by calling or texting 811** (formerly Telehealth Ontario). More information, including a live chat feature can be found here: <https://health811.ontario.ca/static/guest/home>
- **For help with a mental health crisis**, contacting TADH's Crisis Line at 705-264-3003 (available 24/7).

Connecting with you and ensuring the voice of patients/families is heard:

I am looking forward to connecting with more partners, patients, families, and caregivers through this blog space as well as through engagements at Timmins and District Hospital (TADH). For example, we just have launched a recruitment campaign to grow our [Patient and Family Advisory Committee](#) to ensure that it is reflective of the communities we serve and that the voices of patients and family members are at the centre of our decision-making.

Each month, I'll be sharing with you, through this blog space, news of the Timmins and District Hospital and how we are working to improve the health of Northerners. If you ever want to reach out to me to learn more about the work we do or have a question, please do so through the space provided below. I'm always happy to hear from the people we serve and our partners.

Take care and wishing you a healthy 2025!

Kate Fyfe

President and CEO