

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2008

STEGH Managing Outbreak with Visitors' Co-operation

St. Thomas, ON - An outbreak of respiratory illness has been confirmed on C Wing of the Complex Continuing Care (CCC) area at the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital (STEGH). The Hospital has been working closely with Elgin St. Thomas Public Health to manage the situation and precautions are in place on this wing, to minimize the spread of illness. Currently, five (5) patients have respiratory symptoms related to this outbreak.

At the recommendation of Public Health, STEGH is asking that only immediate family members visit patients on CCC-C Wing, until the outbreak is over. These visitors are asked not to bring children. Once a person has visited with a patient on C Wing they must not travel to other areas of the Hospital.

While the visiting restrictions are in place only for CCC-C wing, it is essential that all visitors wash their hands thoroughly, or use the liquid hand sanitizer before and after visiting. Careful hand washing is critical to manage the spread of infection. All visitors are asked to not visit if they have any signs or symptoms of illness.

Several Ontario communities are reporting outbreaks of respiratory illness which include fever, cough, runny nose, and chest congestion. "Respiratory illness has been prevalent in the community all winter," states MaryLynn Maerten, Manager, Health Protection Department at Elgin St. Thomas Public Health. "There have been several outbreaks reported in other area facilities."

The Hospital's main concern is for the safety and well being of patients, visitors, staff and volunteers, and is taking every precaution to ensure this. "We are confident we are doing everything possible to contain this outbreak and to protect our patients and staff," states Anna Hunt, Infection Control Specialist at the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital. "Our staff are well trained to identify trends immediately and step up precautions, which are often put in place even before a diagnosis is made, based on the patients' symptoms. We have found the sooner precautions are in place, the better control we have over reducing the potential for spread to other areas of the Hospital."

Both Public Health and STEGH will closely monitor the situation for any need to revise these temporary precautions.

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