

St. Mary's COVID-19 Outbreak Frequently Asked Questions – for patients and families

My loved one is a patient at the hospital, what do I need to know?

- We understand news of outbreak is distressing. Please know that St. Mary's declared an outbreak out of an abundance of caution and we continue our safety measures for staff and patients.
- On the fifth floor, patients who were found to have COVID-19 have been moved to a unit that cares only for patients with the virus.
- All patients remaining on the fifth floor have been tested and results are pending.
- On the units that aren't designated for COVID-patients, there will be a maximum of two patients per room, and one patient per room if possible.
- We continue to closely monitor patients throughout the hospital for potential COVID symptoms.
- We are reinforcing that patients are to wear masks at all times.
- Staff and physicians continue to wear appropriate protection when caring for patients including face shields
- We are continuing with heightened cleaning in washrooms and high touch surfaces in patient rooms and across the hospital.
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This is your third outbreak in just a few days. What is going on?

- We do very strict regular surveillance of any clusters of patients and staff symptoms, which is how this was picked up. We decided to declare these outbreaks in consultation with Public Health as a safety measure. More than 30 hospitals in Ontario have declared outbreaks of COVID-19.
- We are being extra cautious and are taking steps to contain the outbreaks.
- This outbreak is an example of one of the challenges with diagnosing COVID-19. It has a long incubation period. Hospitals are seeing, in some situations, patients initially test negative and subsequently test positive. Our clinicians have been re-testing patients where there is a progression of symptoms, or in the absence of another diagnosis, and this is identifying more cases of COVID-19.
- We have been and continue to follow up with staff and physicians who we believe had contact with the patients to check for any risks and any symptoms. We test them for COVID-19 if they have symptoms.

Is it safe to come to St. Mary's?

- Patient and staff safety continues to be St. Mary's top priority and care continues to be safe at the hospital.
- We declared this outbreak, in collaboration with Waterloo Region Public Health, as a safety measure, and out of an abundance of caution.
- Patients who need urgent and emergency care are strongly encouraged to continue to come to the hospital. Particularly if they are experiencing symptoms of heart attack and stroke call 911.
- Though there is no set criteria to define a hospital outbreak of COVID-19, over 30 hospitals have declared them as a safety measure.
- Everyone who arrives at the hospital is screened at the door for COVID-19 symptoms and given a mask to wear.
- There are separate areas of the Emergency Department patients with and patients without COVID-19 symptoms.

What are some measures that have been put in place to make sure this doesn't happen again?

Some of the measures at St. Mary's to date that will be further emphasized and expanded upon include:

- We do active surveillance to identify clusters and follow-up investigation. These cases were identified through that rigorous process.
- On the fifth floor, patients were found to have COVID-19 have been moved to a unit that cares only for patients with the virus.
- All patients remaining on the fifth floor have been tested and results are pending.
- On the third floor seven remaining patients have been tested for COVID-19 and all tested negative. If staff test positive, they self-isolate at home.
- On the units that aren't designated for COVID patients, we are limiting occupancy to a maximum of two or less.
- We continue to closely monitor patients throughout the hospital for potential COVID symptoms.
- We are reinforcing that patients should be wearing masks at all times.
- Staff and physicians continue to wear appropriate protection when caring for patients including face shields.
- We are continuing with heightened cleaning in washrooms and high touch surfaces in patient rooms and across the hospital.
- Screening for COVID-19 symptoms is done for all individuals entering our hospital, including staff.
- Regular staff education and reminders on the use of personal protective equipment, physical distancing and hand-hygiene.
- As part of ongoing risk assessments, continually reviewing our practices and implementing new measures as required.

If I'm on the fifth floor, will I be allowed to go home or do I have to wait until the outbreak is over?

- If your care provider decides you are suitable for discharge, you will be discharged home.
- If you are being repatriated back to another hospital, you will be transferred after communication with the receiving hospital and with appropriate precautions.
- If you have support services arranged through the LHIN, you will continue to be supported at home and our LHIN team at St. Mary's will communicate with providers in the community to ensure any appropriate precautions are taken.

Are there any special precautions that I or my loved one need to take once I am discharged home?

- We ask that you [self-monitor](#) for symptoms. If you have questions and/or you experience any symptoms, please contact your primary care provider or Public Health at 519-575-4400.

How do I know what symptoms to look for?

- Please check [here](#) for a self-assessment tool.

What about visitors?

- Our visitor restrictions are still in place, at this time, no visitors or caregivers are allowed in hospital except under exceptional circumstances. This will be decided in consultation with the patient's unit.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

- Patients or families with questions can call St. Mary's Patient Experience Office at 519-749-6578, ext. 6867.