



C R E D I T • V A L L E Y
THE CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Gastrointestinal Outbreak at The Credit Valley Hospital

Tuesday, February 12, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Mississauga, Ontario): The Credit Valley Hospital is experiencing an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness (“stomach flu”) on two of its nursing units. The illness has hit patients and well as staff working on the nursing units.

Gastrointestinal illnesses, often called stomach flu, are passed in the stool and vomit of infected persons. Proper hand hygiene is imperative to prevent the spread of the illness.

Although visitors are still allowed in hospital at this time, the hospital is posting notices at all entrances asking visitors who do not feel well, to refrain from visiting at this time. A fact sheet (see attached) detailing the signs and symptoms of the illness is also being handed out to visitors.

The illness is having a serious impact on the hospital's ability to move admitted patients from the emergency department, to a bed on nursing units. New admissions to nursing units are limited to areas that have not shown signs of infection which means the emergency department is currently in “gridlock” since its ability to move admitted patients to nursing units is severely compromised. At last report, 37 patients were lying on stretchers in the ER waiting for the next available bed on the nursing unit.

It takes several days to confirm that a patient has gastrointestinal illness. While the diagnosis is being determined, the patients are kept in isolation and any visitors and staff coming in contact with the patients must wear gloves and gowns to protect themselves and others from spreading infection outside the patient's room.

The hospital is asking the community to prevent the spread of germs at home and within the community by washing their hands frequently to prevent the spread of germs. Visitors are asked not to visit patients in hospital if they are feeling unwell.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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WHAT IS VIRAL GASTROINTESTINAL ILLNESS (also called the “ Stomach Flu“)?

Viral gastrointestinal illnesses are passed in the stool and vomit of infected persons.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Anyone can get the virus by direct contact with an infected person or by coming in contact with objects contaminated by an infected person. This type of gastrointestinal illness is usually spread by touching infected material and transferring the virus to your mouth.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and sometimes fever.

HOW SERIOUS IS IT?

At this time of year, it is normal for healthcare facilities to experience a few isolated staff and patient cases of viral gastroenteritis. While the virus does not cause severe illness, people whose health is already compromised are likely to be more affected. That is why it is very important to prevent the spread of the virus in hospitals.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

This type of illness usually lasts for about two days. Treatment includes plenty of fluids, rest and isolation of patients with symptoms. It is important to know that patients are contagious for 48 hours after their symptoms stop.

HOW CAN I HELP?

The best way to protect yourself from getting sick is by practicing good hand washing and hygiene. If you develop symptoms, please do not visit the hospital until you are better. If you have any concerns about how you are feeling, you should consult your family physician.

People who are ill should try to avoid preparing or handling food for others. Whenever possible, they should also use a separate bathroom.

More information on the various forms of gastrointestinal illness is available by contacting the Region of Peel's Public Health Department at (905) 799-7700. If community members have any concerns, they should contact their family physician or the local health department.

WHAT IS THE HOSPITAL DOING TO CONTROL THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS?

We have taken the necessary steps to help avoid spread of the virus, including isolating patients who are experiencing symptoms and treating their symptoms. Our Infection Prevention and Control team is monitoring all areas of the hospital. We have communicated information to families and visitors throughout the hospital asking them not to visit if they are ill.

IF A UNIT IS CLOSED DUE TO AN OUTBREAK, WHEN WILL IT BE RE-OPENED?

The virus is contagious for 48 hours after the symptoms stop. A unit is re-opened when there have been no new cases for a minimum of three consecutive days. We will continue to provide updates on any situation at the hospital.

**Prepared by: Community Relations and Infection Prevention & Control
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