

This year, the Emergency Room (ER) Departments at the Niagara Health System’s Port Colborne Site and Douglas Memorial Site in Fort Erie are converting to 24-hour Urgent Care Centres.

Hospital staff and health-care partners are involved in making sure this is a safe and smooth transition for the public. As soon as all the details are finalized, dates for the changeovers will be announced.



Key Facts

- **Port Colborne Site’s** ER Department will convert to an Urgent Care Centre (targeting July 2009).
- **Douglas Memorial Site’s** ER Department will convert to an Urgent Care Centre (targeting September 2009).
- **Both Centres will be open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day**
- The doctors/nurses staffing the Urgent Care Centres will have the same training as ER staff, with the same equipment – they can handle any case that comes in.
- The majority (up to 95%) of the patients who now come to these sites for their emergency care will continue to be served in Fort Erie and Port Colborne.
- Serious emergency and life-threatening cases will be transported to full-service ERs in Welland or Niagara Falls or elsewhere.
- For Port Colborne and Fort Erie sites, the main differences in the service are that ambulances will no longer bring emergency patients to these sites and patients will no longer be admitted directly to inpatient beds at these sites.
- As has been the case for the past few years, patients will be transferred to a larger Niagara Health site for consultations with specialists and when they need sophisticated diagnostic tests.
- At Niagara Health ER Departments and Urgent/Prompt Care Centres, new medical directives allow RNs to order blood work and diagnostic tests to help reduce the wait time for patients being assessed and treated.

What is the difference between an ER and Urgent Care Centre?

- **A full-service ER** takes every level of patient, from those suffering a life-threatening heart attack or car accident, to those with a minor ear infection or sprained ankle.
- Niagara Emergency Medical Services (EMS) paramedics provide care and transport patients by ambulance to ERs. ER physicians admit patients to hospital acute care (medical/surgical) beds or mental health beds.
- **Urgent or Prompt Care Centres** (these terms are interchangeable) are for those patients who have bumps and bruises, mild infections or injuries.
- Niagara EMS paramedics do not take emergency cases to Urgent Care Centres. Urgent Care physicians do not admit patients to an inpatient unit, although they may keep a patient for several hours for observation. Patients who come to an Urgent Care Centre but require more detailed diagnostic tests or treatment are transferred to a full-service ER.

How are Patients Assessed?

The Triage Nurse is the first person patients will see in an Urgent Care Centre or ER Department. Triage is a head-to-toe assessment done to determine who needs to be seen immediately, based on each patient’s medical need.

USE THESE SERVICES	LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT/TRIAGE
<p>Call 911 or Go to full-service ER Department</p>	<p>Level 1 – Resuscitation (Critical), e.g. cardiac arrest, shock, major trauma</p> <p>Level 2 – Emergent, e.g. asthma, altered mental state</p>
<p>Go to Urgent Care Centre Level 4 and 5 patients can also be treated at a Walk-in Clinic</p>	<p>Level 3 – Urgent, e.g. abdominal pain</p> <p>Level 4 – Less-urgent, eg. vomiting and diarrhea with no dehydration, earache</p> <p>Level 5 – Non-urgent, eg. vomiting, sore throat</p>

Know Your Options

The Ontario government has launched a new website to let communities know about the primary healthcare services available to them. Learn more about your options – go to www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions and click on the grey Find Your Health Care Options box or call 1-866-330-6206.



Call 911

for a life-threatening emergency

You should use 911 only in an emergency. Dialing 911 provides you with emergency response and transport to emergency services and should be reserved for those who really need assistance.

Sometimes it is difficult to know whether your problem is serious or not. Call 911 or go to an emergency department for:

- pains or tightness in the chest
- severe pain
- shortness of breath
- choking or having difficulty breathing
- fractured or broken bone
- sudden, severe headaches, vision problems, sudden weakness, numbness and/or tingling in the face, arm or leg, trouble speaking, or dizziness (stroke symptoms)
- child has diarrhea and vomiting and won’t eat or drink
- baby under six months has a fever over 38.5°C (101°F)

If you have any doubts about whether you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911. The ambulance will take you to the appropriate ER. To learn more about Niagara EMS services, go to www.niagarahealth.on.ca and click on living/emergency services.

Go to

A Hospital Emergency Room

ERs accept ambulances and are staffed by physicians and nurses trained in emergency medicine treating patients with severe illnesses or injuries. ERs experience high volumes of patients, especially during the winter and holiday season. Patients are seen in order of urgency, not by arrival time, so please be patient. The ER is designed to handle the above emergency medical situations.

NIAGARA HEALTH EMERGENCY ROOMS

Fort Erie: Douglas Memorial Site, 230 Bertie Street, Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Converts to 24-hour Urgent Care Centre September/09)

Niagara Falls: Greater Niagara General Site, 5546 Portage Road., Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Port Colborne: Port Colborne Site, 260 Sugarloaf Street, Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Converts to 24-hour Urgent Care Centre July/09)

St. Catharines: St. Catharines General Site, 142 Queenston St., Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Welland: Welland Site, 65 Third Street, Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Go to

An Urgent Care Centre

Urgent (Prompt) Care Centres are similar to Emergency rooms in that they are staffed by physicians and nurses trained in emergency medicine. These professionals treat illnesses or injuries that cannot wait for a scheduled appointment with a primary care physician. Urgent Care Centres are equipped to do diagnostic tests such as x-rays and ultrasounds as well as blood tests.

They treat adults and children who have non life-threatening illnesses or injuries such as:

- cuts or wounds that may require stitches
- sprains, strains or deep bruises
- mild to moderate asthma attacks
- ear infections
- urinary tract infections
- coughs, congestion, sore throats
- diarrhea
- insect bites and rashes, abrasions, fever, simple fractures

NIAGARA HEALTH URGENT CARE CENTRES

St. Catharines: Prompt Care Centre, Ontario Street Site, 155 Ontario St., Open 7 days a week, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. (note – name is changing to Urgent Care Centre July 6/09)

Port Colborne: OPENING JULY/09 – Urgent Care Centre, Port Colborne Site, 260 Sugarloaf St., Open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day (currently ER Department is located at this site)

Fort Erie: OPENING SEPTEMBER/09 – Urgent Care Centre, Douglas Memorial Site, 230 Bertie St., Open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day (currently ER Department is located at this site)

Go to

Your family physician

Ask your doctor’s office what back-up coverage they offer or recommend when they are closed (i.e. after-hours clinics or on-call service).

Call

Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or go to www.health.gov.on.ca

Telehealth Ontario provides free access to a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for general health questions. You will receive confidential advice on what to do or where to go about any health-related concerns.

Go to

A Walk-in Clinic

A walk-in clinic is available to anyone requiring non life-threatening medical care. It is a primary care clinic, but not an urgent care facility or emergency department, providing same-day care by a physician without an appointment.

Walk-in clinics provide care for non life-threatening illness such as:

- fever
- sore throat
- cough
- earaches
- muscle/joint pain
- skin lesions

NIAGARA HEALTH LOCATION

Niagara-on-the-Lake: Walk-in Clinic, Niagara-on-the-Lake Site, 176 Wellington St., Open Monday to Friday, 9:30 a.m. to Noon and 2 to 4:30 p.m., Thursdays 12:30 to 8 p.m.



Learn More... Public Info Sessions

Naturally, there are many questions about the transition from Emergency to Urgent Care in our Lake Erie communities. Hear from clinical leaders on the difference between Emergency and Urgent Care, the hospital-based services available, what changes mean for residents, and more. There will be a question and answer period and hand-outs will be available. Free admission and parking at all sessions.

URGENT CARE PUBLIC INFO SESSIONS:				DISPLAY AND HANDOUTS:	
<p>June 16</p> <p>Wainfleet Firehall Highway 3 Tuesday, June 16 3 to 5 p.m. (presentation at 3:30) 6 to 8 p.m. (presentation at 6:30)</p>	<p>June 25</p> <p>Port Colborne Guild Hall 72 Charlotte Street Thursday, June 25 3 to 5 p.m. (presentation at 3:30) 6 to 8 p.m. (presentation at 6:30)</p>	<p>July 15</p> <p>Fort Erie - Douglas Memorial Site 230 Bertie Street Wednesday, July 15 3 to 6 p.m. (presentations at 3:30 and 5 p.m.)</p>	<p>June 17</p> <p><i>Stop by our display at the Friends Over 55 Seniors Day Celebration</i> Port Colborne Seniors Centre 554 Fielden Avenue Wednesday, June 17 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.</p>		

For more information, go to www.niagarahealth.on.ca. Also, look for more info in local newspapers. More Public Info Sessions will be booked in the Fort Erie community.