



Toronto General Hospital

University Health Network

MEDIA ADVISORY: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TORONTO, December 9, 2002 -- The Emergency Department at Toronto General Hospital (TGH), University Health Network closed as of 6:00 PM today due to patients and staff who have become ill with symptoms similar to the Norwalk-like virus. The Toronto Western Hospital Emergency Department remains open.

Ambulances have been advised that the TGH Emergency Department is closed. Patients experiencing Norwalk-like symptoms are requested to call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for advice, go to walk-in clinics, or see their family physician.

Symptoms include sudden onset of diarrhea or vomiting, as well as abdominal pain and nausea. Although quite contagious, Norwalk virus is non-lethal and is a common cause of epidemic gastroenteritis in hospitals, nursing homes, and day care centres. Usually, it is transmitted from hand-to-mouth through contaminated hands, food, or water. Symptoms usually last from 24 to 48 hours, and appear one or two days after being in contact with the virus.

The following precautions are being taken at TGH to limit the spread of the virus:

- Patients with symptoms have been isolated;
- All persons entering the room where symptomatic patients are located will need to wear gowns and gloves;
- Additional environmental precautions are being taken by cleaning and disinfecting hospital common areas;
- All patients admitted to TGH via the Emergency Department since Friday are being closely monitored to see if they develop any symptoms.

Additionally, TGH requests that any visitor with a cold, flu or similar illness refrain from visiting the hospital until they are well. Visitors are also urged to wash their hands after arriving and leaving the hospital since thorough handwashing is the best means of preventing the spread of this and similar viruses.

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