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Health Unit declares flu outbreak

Stevenson Memorial Hospital is stepping up efforts to contain spread of the flu virus in response to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) declaration of community wide influenza activity.

In addition to hand hygiene stations at hospital entrances, surgical masks are available and we will continue the current practice of screening all patients and visitors upon arrival at the hospital. Screeners will now ask everyone their flu vaccine status. Anyone coming into the hospital who hasn't received the flu shot a minimum of two weeks earlier, will be asked to wear a surgical mask while on hospital property. Patients, visitors and staff are also strongly encouraged to clean their hands before entering the facility, and before and after entering a patient room.

All staff has been encouraged to receive the influenza vaccine and more than 59 percent have been vaccinated. However, staff that are not vaccinated will now be required to wear surgical masks at all times while the Health Unit's declaration remains in effect.

It has been determined that the influenza vaccine is not optimally matched to one of the influenza strains this year which may result in reduced vaccine effectiveness against the virus. However, the vaccine can still provide some protection against influenza-like illness from the mismatched strain and can offer protection against other influenza strains included in the vaccine.

Our focus is to protect staff, physicians and volunteers safe and healthy and to ensure influenza doesn't spread from patient to patient, which could potentially lead to the declaration of an outbreak within the hospital.

Anyone with flu-like symptoms who doesn't require the services of the hospital is strongly encouraged to stay home. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has developed the ?Get a Flu Shot' website for more information on flu facts and flu shot safety. The website can be accessed at www.ontario.ca/flu