

October 2023

Like the majority of communities across Ontario, North Perth is experiencing a shortage of family doctors and other primary healthcare providers.

While we continue to actively recruit new doctors, recent retirements and departures have left the North Perth site unable to continue to offer care to more than 1,000 existing patients. In our local emergency department, almost half of the patients seen do not have a family doctor.

We know that the loss of a family doctor can be worrying and unsettling for patients. While historically other local doctors have been able to support orphaned patients, the local health team has exceeded the limits of what each doctor can manage. This has led to difficult choices that will leave a significant number of patients without primary care at this time.

We are working hard to recruit new physicians and continue to look for other ways to increase access to primary care in our community. As new developments take place, we will share updates on our website, via social media and through news releases.

When the clinic recruits new physician(s), former patients will be contacted as space becomes available.

Your health matters, so in the meantime, here are answers to some frequently asked questions, as well as helpful resources.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**How do I find another doctor? Are there any other doctors in Listowel who are accepting new patients?**

- Dr. Alshami at the IDA pharmacy in Listowel has advised that he is currently accepting patients and he is also accepting walk-ins.
- Register for Health Care Connect at 1-800-445-1822 or visit the HealthCare Connect website: [HealthCare Connect](#).
- You can contact surrounding area clinics and inquire if they are accepting patients.

**How do I get my prescriptions renewed after my doctor leaves?**

- As of January 2023, pharmacists are able to prescribe medications for 13 minor ailments. Talk to your pharmacist about how they can help with things like dermatitis,



urinary tract infections and conjunctivitis or go to [Ontario College of Pharmacists](#) for more information.

- Your former doctor will provide up to one year of prescription renewals before their departure IF possible based on your situation and medications.
- After that, you must get renewals from another source, such as a walk-in clinic or online services, such as, [www.getMaple.ca](http://www.getMaple.ca) or [www.TIAHealth.com](http://www.TIAHealth.com)

#### **What about test follow up?**

- Your doctor will follow up on tests they ordered, even after their departure from the clinic.
- Tests ordered by another physician or nurse practitioner will be followed up by the ordering physician or nurse practitioner.

#### **Can I continue seeing another doctor or a nurse practitioner at the clinic after my doctor leaves?**

- Unfortunately, patients will no longer have access to primary care at the Listowel Clinic, including Family Health Team providers like the nurse practitioners, dietician, etc. The allied health providers will work with you to attempt to find alternative options.

### **Preventative Healthcare and Other Resources**

#### **Breast Screening**

- People ages 50 to 74 can call the local Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) location to make an appointment (a doctor or nurse practitioner referral is not needed) at 1-519-291-5490.
- Letters are sent through OBSP to those who are eligible for screening. Routine screening is every two years.

#### **Colorectal Screening**

- Cancer Care Ontario sends letters through the 'ColonCancerCheck' program to eligible people ages 50-75, who have never been screened or who are due for screening. Routine screening is every two years.
- Fecal occult blood test (sometimes referred to as a "FIT") screening kit can be requested directly by going to [Health811](#) or calling '811'. Once a FIT package has been ordered, LifeLabs will mail it package to your Ontario mailing address of choice and patients can do the test at home and return it to LifeLabs.

- If a patient is at increased risk of colorectal cancer or requires a colonoscopy, they should contact [Health811](#) for more information and options. Screening or testing may differ to that described above for people at higher risk.

### **Cervical Screening (PAP tests)**

- Cervical Cancer screening is for anyone over 21 years of age who is or has ever been sexually active. This testing should be done every three years and can be stopped at the age of 70 if you have had 3 or more normal tests in the previous 10 years.
- Letters are sent to those eligible for cervical cancer screening from Cancer Care Ontario.
- Some public health units and community health centres also provide Pap tests. Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) has sexual health clinics and services, including here in Listowel that include PAP tests and other services.

To book an appointment:

- Text Perth: 519-635-2504
- Text Huron: 519-440-1439
- Call 1-888-221-2133 ext. 3779 (Perth) or ext. 2406 (Huron)

**Note:** During the school year, Sexual Health Clinics are available at some Avon Maitland District School Board high schools. For an appointment, use the above contact information.

- Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health clinics also offer immunization and sexual health services. Services are by appointment only. Call 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006 to book at one of their locations: Guelph, Fergus or Orangeville.

*If there the results are abnormal, Ontario Health will notify the patient and if patient agrees Ontario Health will assign a doctor for follow up.*

### **Regular Injections**

- Many medication injections can be administered at local pharmacies, check with your pharmacist about options. For example, starting summer 2023, pharmacists can provide vitamin B12, Prolia or Depo-Provera.
- For a full list of medications that pharmacists can inject please visit [Ontario College of Pharmacists - Injectable Medications List](#) or contact your pharmacy for more information.

### **Diabetes Management**

The Huron Perth Diabetes Education Centre (DEC) is a regional program and is available to all residents of North Perth. Patients do *not* need have a family doctor in order to access this service. For more information or to book an appointment, please visit: [Huron Perth DEC](#) for more information.

### **Routine Immunizations**

Individuals who do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner can receive routine immunizations at one of Huron Perth Public Health's (HPPH) immunization clinics. Call 1-888-221-2133 ext. 3558 to book an appointment at an HPPH immunization clinic.

### **Pregnancy, Childbirth and Parenting**

- Listowel Memorial Hospital (LMH) Mother/Baby Program provides care for those who want to deliver at Listowel Memorial Hospital. See [LWHA Mother/Baby Program](#) for more information and options (e.g., Countryside Midwives).
- Huron Perth Public Health offers classes, clinics and programs for expectant parents and families with young children. Go to [HPPH Prenatal and Parenting Programs](#) or call 1-888-221-2133 for more information.

### **General Advice and Information**

- In addition to the online virtual care services listed earlier, **Health811** offers 24/7 health advice and other services; call 8-1-1 or go to [Health811](#) to access resources and/or live chat.
- **211 Ontario** can connect individuals to non-emergency community programs and social services in our area; call or text 2-1-1 or go to [211Ontario](#) to access this service.

Again, we recognize that being without a family doctor and other primary care services is unsettling and hope that these resources are helpful as we work to recruit new physicians and continue to look for other ways to increase access to primary care in our community.

Sincerely,

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