

## **FAQ - Emergency Departments**

### **Is it true that hospitals are busier than ever?**

QHC hospitals, like most in Ontario, continue to experience unprecedented patient volumes. Last year, the number of patients cared for at QHC hospitals increased by 13,000 compared to two years ago.

### **How do you determine the order patients are seen in the ED?**

Patients start receiving care the moment they meet the triage nurse when they arrive at the emergency department (ED). She/he is a specialty trained nurse that does the important first assessment to see how critical the patient's condition is. It's that "triage" assessment that determines the order patients are seen within the department. It's not based on when the patient arrives at the ED, it's based on how sick or injured the patient is. Our teams respond first to the most critically ill patients. That means patients that aren't facing imminent, life-threatening issues may have to wait for longer periods of time. We understand that patients waiting can feel terrible and uncomfortable – but in the hospital setting, we must care for the most timely and grave health issues first.

### **What factors impact wait times in the emergency department?**

Treatment of patients in the emergency department can take a longer period of time for a number of reasons, including:

- If a patient needs to be admitted to hospital, they need to continue to receive medical care in the emergency department until a bed becomes available. We have to wait to transfer a patient out of the ED until a bed is available on an inpatient unit. The nurses and doctors in the ED must continue caring for the patient until they are transferred.
- Waiting for a specialist consultation, either in person or through video conferencing from a larger tertiary-care hospital.
- Waiting on the results of lab or diagnostic tests to determine the next steps in the patient's care.

### **Why is the wait sometimes longer at the Belleville General Hospital (BGH) ED?**

There are a number of factors that impact the Emergency Department wait times at the BGH Emergency Department specifically. As the regional secondary hospital, the ED cares for more patients, and sicker patients. BGH handles not only the patients coming in to the BGH ED, but also the sickest patients from QHC's other three hospitals - Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital, Trenton Memorial Hospital and North Hastings Hospital are transferred for care at BGH. Things like patients having a stroke, or in need of emergency surgery, MRI testing or intensive care.