Flu season, complicated by COVID-19

Rollie Green gets his wound healed...at last

Chuck Speiker had a stroke. Amy noticed

COVID variants and vaccination

Sammy Bowman gets well-rounded care
We’re still weathering the pandemic.

Fall often feels like a season of new momentum – the start of the school year, crisp air, changing colors. Unfortunately, during this season, our long COVID pandemic has been gaining momentum from the highly contagious delta variant. Young, healthy adults have been getting very sick; children are getting sicker from delta, too. The surge is likely to continue through fall and into winter.

Here at NH+C, we’re keeping precautions in place to protect patients and staff. Our activities flex as needed when COVID cases rise or fall. We remain vigilant on every aspect of care, from elective surgeries and respiratory care to visitor restrictions and masking.

You can do your part, too. If you have not yet been vaccinated, get vaccinated as soon as you can. It’s your best protection against serious illness. It also blocks the paths that virus can travel from body to body, and keeps the virus from spreading, and getting stronger.

NH+C is requiring COVID-19 vaccination and influenza vaccination for all employees, providers, students and volunteers in all NH+C facilities. We will do our best to protect the health of everyone that comes through our doors, and vaccination is an essential part of protecting those that trust us with their care.

In the coming months, we will continue to serve our patients and community as best we can. We will move forward, carefully and responsibly, to provide the best health care possible however circumstances may change. Your safety and health are always our top priority.

I encourage you to continue taking care of yourself… and others. We’re here when you need us.

Steve Underdahl  
CEO and President  
Northfield Hospital + Clinics

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**CLINIC UPDATES**

**FARMINGTON FRIENDS:**

When you need to treat a health issue before work or school...we’re ready. NH+C’s Farmington Clinic offers a morning walk-in clinic, Monday-Friday from 7:00 am to 9:00 am. Walk in with a problem, walk out with a plan. 4645 Knutsen Drive in Farmington // Phone: (651) 460-2300

**HELLO, KENYON!**

We’re excited to open our newest clinic – a full-time primary care clinic with convenient, reliable care for all ages in the Kenyon community. Our team is led by Chris Werner, CNP, APRN – a family medicine practitioner with expertise in urgent care and a passion for rural medicine. “It’s an honor and humbling when someone asks you to take care of them,” Chris says. “I am committed to being there for the people of Kenyon.” Chris holds a Masters’ degree in nursing as a Family Nurse Practitioner, and is board-certified. Opening in October, with day and evening hours, at 225 Huseth Street (on the Kenyon Senior Living campus). Phone: (507) 623-0123
Flu season, complicated by COVID-19

Influenza and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they’re caused by different viruses.

COVID-19 can cause more serious illness for some people. It’s also possible to be infected (and contagious) with no symptoms.

You can have influenza and COVID-19 at the same time.

Because many symptoms are the same for influenza and COVID-19, you can’t be diagnosed by symptoms alone. A COVID-19 and/or influenza test confirms your diagnosis. (Source: CDC)

Some symptoms are different with the delta variant. “Many patients who are now testing positive for COVID-19 have a sore throat and stuffy nose,” says Dr. Jennifer Fischer, director of Emergency Medicine at NH+C. “This was rare with the original virus but seems common with the delta variant.”

Don’t assume a sore throat or congested nose mean it’s just a cold or allergies. To be sure, get tested.

YOUR BEST DEFENSE

Vaccination is your best protection against serious illness from influenza and from COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination is widely available. The best time to get vaccinated against COVID-19 is as soon as you can. Schedule your appointment: 507-646-8019

Influenza viruses are constantly changing, so vaccine composition is reviewed each year and updated as needed, based on which influenza viruses are making people sick. It’s important to get a flu shot each year. The best time to get your flu shot is in September or October for maximum protection throughout influenza season. Call your clinic to schedule.

When to call the doctor

If it’s an emergency, go to the Emergency Department or call 911.

Call your clinic if you have any of these symptoms:

- Trouble breathing
- Severe dehydration
- Very high fever
- Unable to drink fluids
- Pain or pressure in the chest or belly
- Severe or repeated vomiting
- Fever that gets better, then suddenly worsens, especially with an increased cough

Source: CDC

Comparison of symptoms between COVID-19 and flu:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>COVID-19</th>
<th>Flu</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever/chills</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Aches/Headache</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiredness</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of taste/smell</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>☑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Runny/stuffy nose</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>☑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shortness of breath</td>
<td>☑</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Severity:

- COVID-19: Varies. Older adults and people with certain underlying conditions are at higher risk of severe illness. Seems to cause more severe illness in more people than flu.
- Flu: Varies. Young children, older adults, and people with certain chronic conditions are at higher risk of severe illness.

Onset of symptoms:

- COVID-19: Later (2-14 days after infection)
- Flu: Earlier (1-4 days after infection)

Cause:

- COVID-19: SARS-CoV-2
- Flu: Influenza viruses

CDC.gov/coronavirus
Rollie Green gets results

Rollie Green’s wound was healed in just two months . . . after a year of trying.

Rollie is diabetic. A wound on the bottom of his foot just wasn’t healing – despite constant treatments at a metro hospital. After nearly a year with little progress, Rollie was frustrated. So he tried the new Wound Healing Center at Northfield Hospital. After two months, his wound was gone – and his favorite activities were back.

“It was just amazing how fast things started to improve,” Rollie says. “It’s wonderful.”

Rollie’s care team, led by wound healing expert Jillian Simon, APRN, FNP-BC, used a total-contact cast to take pressure off the wound so it could heal. They changed the cast each week, debriding (removing damaged tissue) and watching the wound closely to make sure it improved.

“Debridement is like weeding a garden: If you don’t get the bad tissue out of the wound, the good tissue doesn’t have a chance to survive and thrive,” Jillian explains. Rollie’s tailored care plan healed his wound sooner than projected, without complications.

“Jillian made predictions on when she’d have him out of the cast,” says Rollie’s partner Sherrie Thibodeau. “She said within three months. She was right on.”

Detailed, computer-based measurements showed progress in the depth and width of the wound. (Their metro hospital took measurements by hand . . . less consistent and accurate, Sherrie says.)

The Wound Healing Center “gave us pictures and showed us progress. The pictures were so clear,” Sherrie says. “Every few weeks they’d give us a printout. We showed it to everyone. We really bragged it up, because we were so impressed.”

When Rollie was close to being healed, “we brought cupcakes and a card to say thank you,” Sherrie says. “It’s a big deal when a wound heals after such a long time.” Now Rollie can get around the house much better, visit his favorite stores (Kwik Trip and Menard’s), help tend to the couple’s lavish gardens, and go cruising in his golf cart with their dog Jack.

To prevent future diabetic wounds, Rollie’s wound healing team encouraged him to lower his blood sugar. They arranged an appointment with Dr. David McIntyre, a family medicine specialist (who is diabetic, too) in the Northfield Clinic. “That’s made a big difference,” Rollie says. Dr. McIntyre recommended getting a continuous glucose monitor (CGM). “That’s the best thing since sliced cheese,” Rollie says. “I used to check my blood sugar maybe twice a day. Now I check it ten times a day because it’s so easy, and I really learn what affects my blood sugar and how fast it’s affected.”

Rollie didn’t need a doctor’s referral to get started at the Wound Healing Center.

“We saw something online and in NH+C Magazine and I said, ‘Let’s give it a try,’” Sherrie recalls. “We
thought, ‘Northfield’s a little town, the metro hospital where we’re going must be better.’ We’re so glad we switched.”

“The staff is extremely good – friendly, kind, and on time,” Rollie says. “Jillian is great – very personable, and great at what she does.”

“The staff knows their stuff, and they’re friendly,” Sherrie adds. “It’s most important to get the wound healed – and when the experience is pleasant, that’s even better.”

“Most people don’t realize how debilitating chronic wounds can be. It can be very isolating, and keep you from doing things that once brought you joy,” Jillian says. “We work hard to make sure everyone who has a wound they want healed can get started as soon as possible.”

Rollie’s advice? “Take your doctors’ suggestions seriously, because you can affect your own health.”

Sherrie adds: “Give the Wound Healing Center a try. We didn’t cancel our metro appointments until we had two appointments here. We liked what we saw, and we kept going.”

And now Rollie is going wherever – whenever – he wants.

Take a video tour of the Wound Healing Center: northfieldhospital.org/wound-healing

“It was just amazing how fast things started to improve.”

Rollie Green, Northfield
“Amy told me later I was slurring my words, that I told someone I went through a red light to get to the clinic,” Chuck recalls. “She said I just wasn’t acting like the Chuck Speiker she knows.

“I just thank God that Amy noticed something was wrong,” Chuck says. “It could have been much worse. What if I had gotten back into my truck to drive home?” (Chuck still isn’t driving again yet: “I’m nervous about it.”)

After Chuck came home from the hospital, his primary care provider, Sarah Lybarger, PA-C contacted

When Chuck Speiker checked in at the Lakeville Clinic, something didn’t quite check out.

Chuck had triple-bypass surgery in 2017. Since then, he gets his blood checked every few weeks at the Lakeville Clinic. Amy Klug is usually there to greet him.

But on this morning, Chuck wasn’t acting like himself. “Amy noticed right away,” Chuck recalls. “She had me sit down, then came out from behind the desk and asked me a few questions.”

After his appointment, Chuck was disoriented. “I remember walking towards the lobby, and the next thing I remember I was being put on a gurney into the ambulance. I said, ‘What’s going on?’ and the paramedic said, ‘You’re having a stroke.’

NH+C’s paramedics took Chuck directly to M Health Fairview Ridges Hospital to get the care he needed right away. (Northfield Hospital is a Level Three Acute Stroke Ready Hospital, working with other hospitals across the region to provide patients a full range of stroke care.)

“I just thank God that Amy noticed something was wrong. It could have been much worse.”

Chuck Speiker, Lakeville
a stroke. Amy noticed

Chuck’s cardiologist at Mayo Clinic. Together, they recommended a neurology consult for Chuck.

“I really appreciate that Sarah made the effort to talk with my cardiologist,” Chuck says. “It gives a person my age with my medical history a little confidence in the medical system.”

He’s glad to have Amy on his team, too.

“Me and Amy have a pretty good relationship,” Chuck says. “When you go into the clinic every 2 to 3 weeks, you get to know people pretty well.

“When you get to be my age, your social life is making doctor appointments. And during the pandemic, that got scary for a while,” Chuck says. “The Lakeville Clinic does an extraordinary job of taking precautions, a wonderful job under the circumstances. People like Amy make it a little more enjoyable.”

And safer, too.
COVID variants: Higher risks...an

The highly contagious delta variant of COVID has been surging across the upper midwest.

Delta puts unvaccinated people at higher risk of serious illness or death. Delta also can be spread by vaccinated people.

Emergency Room physicians Jeff Meland, MD and Monty Seper, MD explain how delta and other COVID variants can affect you – and why vaccination matters now more than ever.

Young, healthy people are getting very sick.
Doctors have been seeing patients get sicker, quicker. Northfield Hospital’s Emergency Department has had an uptick in patients 25-55 years old, unvaccinated, much sicker than COVID patients in the past. More patients need hospitalization. That’s likely to continue through fall, into winter. Young, healthy people should be vaccinated, too.

Vaccination is your best protection. COVID vaccines are highly effective at preventing illness and spread of virus, including the delta variant. They are especially effective at preventing hospitalization and death. If you are not yet vaccinated, your best protection is to get fully vaccinated as soon as possible.

Breakthrough cases mean the stakes are higher now. Because delta is so highly contagious, we must rely on widespread vaccination to keep the virus from traveling between bodies and getting stronger. If it can’t spread, it can’t mutate. Mutation can make the virus worse as it works to outsmart the body.

Vaccination limits the number of bodies that the virus can infect; this prevents the virus from mutating and getting stronger. The first goal of vaccination is to protect you. The second goal is to protect everyone: to block the paths that virus can travel from body to body.

A small number of fully vaccinated individuals do become infected. These breakthrough cases are expected: No vaccine is 100% effective. Breakthrough delta cases have been uncommon; getting more people vaccinated helps slow the spread of delta and keep it from getting stronger.

Even if you’ve had COVID, you should still get vaccinated. We don’t know how long antibodies from illness last. Plus, variants like delta are different enough from earlier strains that you can get sick again – with a more contagious version of COVID.

COVID vaccination is free. Call 507-646-8019 to schedule your vaccination at NH+C.
Some people are concerned about possible long-term effects of COVID vaccines. But lifelong illness and complications from COVID are much more likely than long-term effects from vaccine. Over 1.84 billion people worldwide have been fully vaccinated – the largest population in history, showing the safety of vaccines. (Over 168 million in the U.S. are fully vaccinated as of July.)

If you have an underlying illness, you may be concerned about how vaccine could affect you. But you’re also at higher risk of severe illness from COVID. It’s a challenging double-edged sword for those with underlying illness like diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer or heart disease. You are still better off being vaccinated, because variants raise the risk of severe illness for you (and everyone around you).

Masks + distance make us all safer. Vaccinated people can pass the delta virus to others. Whether or not you are vaccinated, these steps help keep you and others safe: Wear a mask, especially indoors; keep your distance; wash your hands; isolate yourself if you get sick.

Get tested for any symptom. Even if you think it’s allergies or a cold, it’s crucial to rule out COVID so you don’t spread this incredibly contagious variant to others. NH+C clinics offer COVID testing by appointment; call your clinic to schedule.

“This is the health challenge for our generation. Our parents faced polio; their parents faced smallpox. They rallied together to defeat these deadly, contagious diseases. Now it’s our turn.”

Jeff Meland, MD
Brittany Bowman got her son Sam off to a good start, close to home.

Sam was a baby with bright eyes, a winning smile . . . and a flat head. (It’s common.)

Pediatrician Ben Flannery, MD diagnosed Sam’s condition, plagiocephaly, at Sam’s 4-month-old well-child checkup. Babies’ skulls are soft and can become flattened by their position in the uterus, or after birth by spending too much time in one position.

Sam’s mom Brittany wasn’t worried. Sam’s older brother Tommy had flat head syndrome too, plus torticollis (short or tight neck muscles on one side). Tommy had been treated in the Twin Cities. By the time Sam was diagnosed, care was closer to home . . . and more personal.

“I wanted to get a better experience than we had with Tommy,” Brittany recalls. “NH+C had the resources in place with the new Plagio clinic. I was really glad about that.”

A team of specialists – pediatrician, physical therapist, and orthotist (who makes custom helmets) – works together to evaluate baby and make a treatment plan. The team examined Sam together, confirmed the diagnosis, and took measurements for a helmet. Helmet fittings and follow-up were conducted by the orthotist. NH+C partners with Orthotic Care Services for this specialized care.

“I went into it super excited,” Brittany says. “I felt I
had a really solid understanding of the care plan, and I was very comfortable with the people handling my son. That’s a really big deal.”

“Everyone knew Sam by name, listened to any concerns I had, and made it a priority to get us in if he was having any issues,” Brittany adds.

Sam was fitted with his helmet at 4 months and was seen every 2 to 3 weeks for measurements and adjustments to his helmet as he grew. He wore his helmet 23 hours a day, with breaks for bath time and outside time on hot days. “It didn’t restrict any of his activities,” Brittany says. Babies typically wear their helmet for three to five months.

Sam also struggled with some large-motor skills. He didn’t tolerate being on his tummy – crucial for developing neck, arm and trunk muscles. Physical therapist Heidi Richardson, PT “has been phenomenal getting Sam up to speed with motor skills” through weekly physical therapy sessions. “Heidi has been a miracle worker getting Sam to do skills in other positions.”

Then at 14 months, Sam was working on crawling and standing. “He’s zooming all over the place on his hands and knees. He’s making big strides,” Brittany says. “Sam loves Heidi. It’s been a great experience for him. I’m so thankful for this team. Everyone is so amazing and kind.”

Brittany’s advice for parents of newborns? “Keep an eye on it. If it comes down to putting your baby in a helmet, do not stress it. There’s no stigma, it’s completely common . . . and it works wonders if you stick with it.”

PLAGIOCEPHALY: A SCARY NAME, BUT EASILY TREATED

NH+C’s Plagiocephaly Clinic makes it comfortable and convenient to treat babies close to home. A pediatrician, physical therapist and orthotist (who makes custom helmets) work together to evaluate baby and make a treatment plan. (You pick the helmet color.)

Some babies benefit from a custom helmet, made by an orthotist. It’s safe and effective: As baby’s head grows, it rounds out to fill open space in the helmet. The best age to start helmet treatment is 4-6 months.

Our team also evaluates the strength and range of motion in baby’s neck. Often, babies with flat head also have shortened neck muscles on one side (torticollis) if baby tends to turn the head frequently to one side. Physical therapy is used to treat torticollis.
Clinics, Hospital + Specialty Care close to you

**Hospital + Emergency**
Northfield Hospital + Emergency
2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1000

**Clinics + Urgent Care**

- **Faribault Clinic**
  1980 30th St. NW (at Lyndale Ave.), Tel: 507-334-1601
- **Farmington Clinic**
  4645 Knutsen Drive, Tel: 651-460-2300
- **Kenyon Clinic**
  225 Hushet Street, Tel: 507-623-0123
- **Lakeville Clinic + URGENT CARE**
  9974 214th Street W., Tel: 952-469-0500
- **Lonsdale Clinic**
  103 15th Avenue SE, Tel: 507-744-3245
- **Northfield Clinic**
  2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1494
- **Express Care Clinic – Northfield**
  706 Division Street, Tel: 507-646-6700

**Specialty Care**

- **Breast Care Center – Northfield**
  2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1143
- **Cancer Care & Infusion Center – Northfield**
  2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-6979
- **Endoscopy – Northfield**
  2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1201
- **Northfield Eye Physicians + Surgeons**
  2019 Jefferson Road, Tel: 507-645-9202
- **Orthopedics Clinic – Northfield**
  1381 Jefferson Road, Tel: 507-646-8900
- **Rehabilitation Clinics**
  Northfield: 1381 Jefferson Road
  Tel: 507-646-8800
  Lakeville: 9913 – 214th Street West
  Tel: 952-985-2020
- **Sleep Center – Northfield**
  2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1099
- **Women’s Health Center – Northfield**
  2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1478
- **Wound Healing Center – Northfield**
  2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-6900

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