

Effective November 1, 1998 the Obstetrics Unit at Milton District Hospital will be Temporarily Closed



Questions and Answers about ... *Obstetrics at Milton District Hospital*

Why has the unit been temporarily closed?

As of November 1, 1998 the Hospital is without adequate physician manpower to effectively manage obstetrical cases. The Board of Directors of Halton Healthcare Services, after receiving input from the Medical Advisory Committee, initiated the temporary closure.

How long will the unit be closed?

Until there are family physicians willing to resume providing primary obstetrical care and appropriate specialist coverage is recruited.

Is this temporary closure a result of the amalgamation?

No - MDH has been dealing with this challenge for 18 months. This has become an urgent issue because effective November 1, 1998 the Hospital will be without adequate physician manpower to effectively manage obstetrical cases.

How long will it take to find an obstetrician?

We don't know. Advertisements have run in national newspapers and various medical journals. A recruitment company is currently being sought to conduct a national recruitment drive on our behalf. It is our hope that the return of family physicians to the provision of primary care obstetrics will occur in tandem with the recruitment of an obstetrician.

Didn't the hospital conduct a search last year?

Yes, but unfortunately the negotiations were not successful and the search continued.

What's different about the search now?

Last year some of the interested applicants may have been deterred because the outcome of the Health Services Restructuring Commission's report was unknown at that time. The Commission clearly stated in their April 1998 report that the amalgamation of MDH and OTMH will ensure continued local services to residents of Milton.

What will happen to the obstetrical unit staff?

In accordance with ONA regulations temporary lay-off notices were issued on October 20, 1998. The staff affected by the closure will be relocated to another area in the hospital as per union regulations or they will be deployed to other areas of the hospital which could include the Oakville site.

Why can't the Oakville doctors help out in Milton?

2,200 babies are born at OTMH annually. The six Oakville obstetricians are currently carrying a full workload of 80 to 110 hours per week. This includes their clinical and on-call commitment. The addition of coverage in Milton would bring about two things:

- Oakville obstetricians would have to absorb an additional 40 hours per week on call - raising their weekly workload to a maximum of 150 hours per week.
- An unsafe care situation. Oakville obstetricians could not physically be on-call for obstetrics at two sites simultaneously.

Oakville obstetricians will provide consultation to patients referred from Milton and are available for emergency cases at the Oakville facilities. In addition, Milton family physicians interested in delivering babies during the closure could use the Oakville facilities.

What happens if the hospital can't find an obstetrician?

We'll keep looking. The population of Milton is expected to grow by 55% by the year 2004. We anticipate the need for a second obstetrician by the year 2004 when births in Milton will reach 580 per year.

I'm pregnant now - where will I deliver my baby?

Speak to your family physician. As a consumer of health care services you have the right to make your own informed choices.

How can I help keep the unit open?

Unfortunately this decision is not a political one - it is based on our ability to provide a safe medical service to the community. The Board will not authorize the re-opening of the unit until they receive reassurances that every woman delivering a baby will have the necessary medical expertise available if necessary. Your understanding and willingness to support the service when it is re-opened is all we can ask for.

I have more questions - who can I call?

Halton Healthcare Services has established an information hotline. This automated telephone line will record your name, telephone number and concern and a member of the hospital staff will return your call as soon as possible. The number is **905-815-5073**.

Halton Healthcare Services was formed through the August 1, 1998 amalgamation of Milton District Hospital and Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital.

Halton Healthcare Services