

novel coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance

VISITING RESIDENTS AND PATIENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Alberta Health Services (AHS) has taken steps to restrict visitors to acute care Long Term Care, Supportive Living and congregate living sites, to protect patients and those at greatest risk of severe illness - including seniors. We recognize that this may be difficult for families and loved ones but we must do all we can to minimize the risk of infection to our patients, residents and staff.

AHS will continue to evaluate the limitations placed on visitations throughout the pandemic.

Visiting a loved one in Long Term Care, Supportive Living or Congregate Living Setting:

Residents of these sites are at extreme risk if exposed to COVID-19.

Can you visit?

- Effective immediately, Sites have implemented a “**No Visitor Policy**”.
- Exceptions:
 - For end of life situations, allow one **Essential Visitor at a time**
 - Sites may in rare situations make an exception and allow one **Essential Visitor** where the resident’s care needs cannot be met without their assistance.

An **Essential Visitor**, designated by the Resident or Guardian (or other alternate decision maker), may be a family member, friend or paid caregiver over 18 years of age.

Pets cannot be brought in by Essential Visitors.

We encourage families to use other methods to be in touch with your loved ones, such as a phone call, video calling or FaceTime.

All Essential Visitors must:

- Pre-arrange visits with the facility manager and be expected by the site administration or charge nurse.
- Submit to a temperature check for fever (over 38 degrees Celsius)
- Complete a standard [screening questionnaire](#) to assess health risk
- Sign in and out of all visits.
- Be escorted by site staff to the resident’s room and remain in the resident’s room for the duration of the visit. Visitation with other residents is not permitted.

You will NOT be allowed to visit if you meet any of the following criteria:

- You have an illness that can be transmitted (symptoms including fever, cough, or feeling unwell);
- You are immunocompromised;
- You are on self-isolation for COVID-19;
- You are being tested for COVID-19;
- You have tested positive for COVID-19. You will not be allowed to visit until your required period of mandatory self-isolation has passed.

In end of life situations when there may be a critical need to visit a loved one, visitors with symptoms may be provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and escorted to and from the room. Staff should contact Infection Prevention and Control for further guidance.

Visiting a loved one in Acute Care/Outpatient Settings:

Can you visit?

- Effective immediately, all acute care/outpatient settings have implemented a **“No Visitor Policy”**
- Exceptions:
 - Maternity/Postpartum: allow one **Essential Visitor**
 - Pediatrics: allow one **Essential Visitor**
 - End of Life; allow one **Essential Visitor at a time**
 - Outpatient and Emergency Department/Urgent Care Visits: Patients who attend an Outpatient Visit or Emergency Department/Urgent Care visit will be required to attend by themselves unless there are specific challenges such as mobility, hearing, visual or memory impairment. Patients with specific impairments are able to continue to bring **one Essential support person/visitor**.

Essential Visitors are designated by the patient, guardian or other alternate decision maker; may be a family member, friend or paid caregiver over 18 years of age.

Further exceptions to this restriction need to be reviewed and approved by the unit manager/charge nurse/nursing staff on case-by-case basis.

Please use other methods to be in touch with your loved one, such as a phone call, video calling or use FaceTime.

Essential Visitor Screening:

Each essential visitor must be verified and undergo a health screening prior to entering the facility. This may include a temperature check or a questionnaire.

Facilities will have a greeter to conduct this screening and verify all essential visitors are designated as essential.

All essential visitors are asked to complete a screening questionnaire to ensure they are well and have not been exposed to respiratory illness prior to entering a facility.

Essential visitors must be feeling well on the date/time of visit.

You will NOT be allowed to visit if you meet any of the following criteria:

- You have an illness that can be transmitted (symptoms including fever, cough, or feeling unwell);
- You are immunocompromised
- You are on self-isolation for COVID-19
- You are being tested for COVID-19;
- You have tested positive for COVID-19. You will not be allowed to visit until your required period of mandatory self-isolation has passed.

In end of life situations when there may be a critical need to visit a loved one, essential visitors with symptoms may be provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and escorted to and from the room. Unit leadership will explore options to facilitate connection with their loved one. Staff should contact Infection Prevention and Control for further guidance.

Children will not be allowed to visit.

- This restriction is in place, as we know that children do not necessarily show symptoms of COVID-19, and could therefore pose an unknown risk to the health of patients and staff. Exceptions to this restriction need to be reviewed and approved by the unit manager or nursing staff on case-by-case basis.

Pets:

- No pets allowed.

During your visit:

1. Follow the instructions provided by site management/charge nurse/nursing staff for check-in, before entering the patient's room.
2. Follow the instructions provided by site management/charge nurse/nursing staff regarding hand hygiene and the use of masks, gowns and other protective equipment.
3. Visitors should consider having shorter visits.
4. Visitors will be asked to leave during specific medical procedures.
5. Perform hand hygiene when leaving the patient room and when leaving the healthcare facility.

Visiting a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19:

In end of life, maternity/postpartum and pediatric situations when there is a critical need to be with a loved one with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 options will be explored to help support the individual's designated support system. Unit leadership will explore options to facilitate connection with their loved one. This may include being provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and escorted to and from the room. Staff should contact Infection Prevention and Control for further guidance.

If you have any questions or concerns, please discuss with the patient's health team, or you can contact Patient Concerns at 1-855-550-2555.