

Holiday FAQs on Family Presence & Visitation during COVID-19 in Acute Care

Will family and friends be allowed to visit during the holidays?

Given the need to ensure the safety of patients, families and staff in our hospitals, Alberta Health Services (AHS) is unable to accommodate access for family and friends beyond what is outlined in the current guidance. Please see ahs.ca/visitation for more information.

If I am eligible to enter, how can I best prepare to safely access the site?

It is crucial right now for everyone to assess their risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19 before entering an AHS site. If you are a designated support person, please ensure you review and follow the direction in this brochure:

[Knowing Your Risk, Role and Responsibilities: A Guide for Designated Support Persons](#)

If you are a visitor planning to see a patient receiving end-of-life care, you must schedule an appointment with the service area in advance.

Everyone entering a site must follow all access requirements including health screening, continuous masking, hand hygiene, wearing required personal protective equipment, and cooperating with staff. **Failure to comply with requirements may result in you having to leave the site.**

Why can't more family and friends see the patient over the holidays if we are all fully immunized against COVID-19?

Vaccines are our best defense against COVID-19. However, being immunized does not always prevent transmission of the virus.

As some patients in our hospitals are extremely vulnerable, we still must minimize access and require all those coming into our sites to follow infection prevention and control measures.

When is it best for me to be at the site with the patient?

Please discuss with the care team the schedule for the day to determine when it is the ideal time to see the patient. If you require entrance during evenings, weekends or statutory holidays, speak with the care team.

If I can't come in person, what are my options? How can the site support connecting virtually?

If you cannot come to a healthcare site in person, or wish to limit time spent at AHS sites to minimize risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19, please consider the use of technology to connect with the patient. Telephone, text messaging, email, and virtual video apps are all great ways to spend time with your loved one.

If the patient does not have access to their own device, ask the care team about patient use of AHS tablets (available in some locations). [Review options](#) to connect virtually.

For more please visit: ahs.ca/visitation

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Can we rotate the designated support person over the holidays?

While changes to the designated support person is permitted in some cases, it must be arranged with the care team.

The intention of limiting the number of designated support persons is to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Rotating different people into a hospital setting increases the risk for everyone. Please check the most recent access requirements for the number of designated support persons the patient can have at ahs.ca/visitation.

Can my loved one receive a pass to leave the site over the holidays?

Passes may be granted if the pass is deemed an essential part of the patient's treatment plan by the care team and must be ordered by a physician or designate. All passes issued must be in accordance with the [visitation guidance](#) and follow [public health measures](#). Regrettably, passes will not be accommodated strictly for the purposes of social visits over the holidays.

Can we visit outside?

Yes, on hospital grounds. However, the suitability of an outdoor visit needs to be collaboratively determined between the patient, the care team and the designated support person. Only designated support persons are able to access the site to bring the patient outside and to return them inside. Designated support persons must undergo screening, wear a mask and practice hand hygiene before entering and exiting the site, as well as the patient's room. Review details in the [guidance](#).

Can I bring in food?

Before bringing in food to the patient at any site, please check with the care team about the process and any restrictions.

Whenever possible, the designated support person should bring the food items to the patient directly. At this time, food cannot be heated or refrigerated at sites.

Due to the requirement for continuous masking, designated support persons cannot eat with patients. Food sharing between individuals is also not allowed.

Can I give gifts to staff?

Due to Infection Prevention and Control requirements, food donations for staff are not accepted at this time; however, non-monetary gifts, of nominal value (\$100 or less), can be accepted by service areas. It is best to check with the service area manager first about what they can and cannot accept.

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