

COVID-19: Family support & visitation of patients & residents

Hospitals

Thinking of supporting or visiting a patient in a hospital?

Patients may identify two Designated Family/Support Persons while admitted to an inpatient unit in an acute care facility.

A Designated Family/Support Person is determined by the patient and is to be involved in care to the extent the patient desires, in collaboration with the care team.

If the patient room is big enough for physical distancing, both may be able to visit at the same time. If not, one can visit at a time.

Maternity – if approved by your care team, other support people such as a surrogate parent or doula may visit in addition to the two Designated Family/Support Persons. Visitors to a maternity ward must be 14 years of age or older.

Pediatrics – Two individuals may be Designated Family/Support Persons. Other children under the age of 14 are not allowed to visit.

Physical distancing must be maintained at all times unless Designated Family/Support Persons and visitors are living in the same household.

Can I accompany a friend or loved one to an emergency department, urgent care centre or ambulatory care?

Patients may identify one Designated Family/Support Person to accompany them while accessing ambulatory, emergency or urgent care services in AHS facilities.

All support persons must be over the age of 14 for visiting. If visiting the Alberta Children's Hospital or the Stollery Children's Hospital, all support persons must be 14 years of age or older.

There may be circumstances where physical distancing with other patients within clinic areas will not allow for the Designated Family/Support Person to be present. In this case, staff will communicate this to the patient and their family/support person, and discuss options based on patient need.

Thinking of supporting or visiting a patient dying in hospital?

All persons considered to be at the end-of-life can have a Designated Family/Support Person with them as much as required. If the room is large enough for social/physical distancing to be maintained, up to two individuals may be permitted. While there is no limit on the number of different individuals who can visit overall, visits need to be coordinated with the care team and the site.

While it is difficult to be precise around when an individual is at end of life, this generally refers to the last four to six weeks of life.

What are the rules on supporting & visiting?

To support and visit a patient or resident you must:

- Wear Designated Family Support or Visitor identification.
- Be feeling well.
- Be 14 years of age and older OR accompanied by an adult (18 years of age in continuing care facilities). **For pediatrics (Alberta Children's Hospital and the Stollery Children's Hospital), children under the age of 14 are not allowed to visit.**
- Complete health screening prior to entering the facility.

- Continuously wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth.
- Remain in the patient's room as much as possible and minimize movement within the facility.
- Perform hand hygiene (hand washing and/or use of hand sanitizer) when entering and leaving the facility and when entering and leaving the patient's room.
- One pet is permitted to accompany a Designated Family/Support Person or visitor for outdoor visits, subject to health and safety precautions and if the site can accommodate.

Continuing Care:

Thinking of supporting or visiting a resident in continuing care?

Residents of these sites are at extreme risk if exposed to COVID-19, therefore a safe visitation approach is required.

Physical distancing must be maintained at all times unless Designated Family/Support Persons and visitors are living in the same household.

For indoor visits:

Each resident or alternate decision maker may designate up to two Designated Family/Support Persons (over the age of 18) who are essential to maintaining mental and physical health.

Additional visitors may be given access in specific situations including end-of-life, change in health status or other pressing circumstances (e.g. financial or legal matters, family crisis).

For outdoor visits:

Up to five individuals, including the resident, may participate in outdoor visits, if consistent with site policy and public health measures.

Can I visit a friend or loved one who is dying while in continuing care?

All persons considered to be at the end-of-life can have a Designated Family/Support Person with them as much as required. Their presence should be coordinated with the care team and reflect the needs of both the patient and their Designated Family/Support Person.

Other support persons/visitors may visit as long as the visits are pre-arranged with the site/unit.

Children under age 18 may visit if accompanied by an adult.

If the room is large enough for social/physical distancing to be maintained, up to three individuals may be permitted at the same time.