



COVID-19

Patient Whānau Visitor Guidelines – Hospital impact: orange

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to set out the Auckland DHB specific expectations for patient whānau visitors accessing our premises. It serves to protect patients, whānau, staff, and the public through limiting visitors to all patients in our hospitals and outpatient locations.

The vulnerable nature of many of the individuals who access our services means they are at higher risk of the impact of COVID-19. We consider the wellbeing of individual patients alongside the wellbeing and safety of our people and the Te Toka Tumai/Auckland DHB community as a whole.

When does this guideline apply?

This guideline applies during the following:

- Hospital impact status: orange

There are four visitor guidelines which determine changes in visitor management.

Movement between levels takes into consideration factors such as:

- Hospital alert level
- Community incidence
- Workforce levels

Includes:

- Public visiting patients within inpatient units
- Public accompanying people to community clinics
- Public accompanying people to any outpatient or ambulatory area/clinic
- Public accompanying people presenting at the emergency department
- Public accompanying people requiring maternity services
- Parents/caregivers accompanying children requiring hospital services

Excludes:

Exclusions will be limited. Charge nurses and clinical nurse managers can assess requests on a case by case basis. For example, exceptions will be considered on compassionate grounds for end of life care.

- This policy excludes patients.
- This policy excludes on duty staff, volunteers and contracted workers performing or providing essential services.

Definitions

- Visitor – Member of the public not receiving assessment, diagnostics or treatment but who is visiting or supporting a patient
- Patient – Member of the public receiving / seeking treatment, this includes mental health service users
- Non-essential visitors – e.g. company representatives, external people attending meetings, people not visiting whānau, off-duty staff.
- Whānau spokesperson – the single point of contact for the whānau.
- High risk area – Emergency departments (ED), intensive care units/high dependency units (ICU/HDU), COVID-19 allocated wards, older peoples' health wards, maternity wards, delivery suite and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), special care baby unit (SCBU), oncology (including chemotherapy areas), renal outpatient and inpatient areas, immunology, or other outpatient areas that have at risk patients as agreed with the incident management team.

Principles

The specific principle of this guideline is to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 for everyone within the hospital environment whilst:

- supporting patients to remain connected with their whānau and loved ones;
- facilitating whānau as partners in patient care.

Te Toka Tumai/Auckland DHB actively assesses risks which enables a series of risk informed decisions to maintain patient, worker and visitor safety. This visitor guideline is not to be taken in isolation – it is part of a much wider risk assessment associated with the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the organisation.

This guideline adopts a values-based approach that reflects Te Toka Tumai/Auckland DHB's core values of haere mai, manaaki, tūhono and angamua. In particular, it:

- Prioritises the safety of visitors, our patients and workers on site;
- Recognises the importance of whānau as partners in patient care;
- Protects the privacy and autonomy of patients and visitors;
- seeks solutions that keep patients connected with whānau; and
- Strives to provide visitors with clear information and explanations that they can relate to their own circumstances.
- Ensures cultural aspects of care are actioned by working with our Māori health teams and Pacific health teams

General guidance - visitor restrictions

Visiting is not permitted except in essential and compassionate circumstances agreed with the charge nurse/midwife manager (clinical nurse manager if out of hours) or a senior medical officer or member of the incident management team. This arrangement can be managed through the visitor management portal through the submission of nominated visitors or support people.

In making exemptions on compassionate grounds, consideration will be given to factors, including but not limited to:

- Parents or guardians of a patient who is under 18 years of age
- Carers of a patient with a disability or cognitive impairment
- Support people for those who can't communicate for themselves
- A partner or support person of a pregnant patient or a patient during a neonatal stay
- Whānau of long-stay inpatients
- Whānau of patients whose condition has worsened
- Whānau of patients at or near end of life
- Whānau who are unable to maintain contact using alternative modes, for example lack of access to technology.

What is the process?

- Patients or whānau should designate a whānau spokesperson who will be the point of contact for the whānau regarding the visiting guideline and any changes to it. This is in case response levels change and the visitor guide needs to change at short notice.
- The patient nominates a named visitor.
- The name is entered by the ward clerk or other member of staff on the ward into the visitor management portal as an approved visitor if compassionate circumstances apply.
- This sends a QR code to the individual to be shown on arrival at the hospital.

Visiting hours

Visiting hours will be limited to compassionate circumstances. It is expected that visiting will be limited to between 07.00 and 20.00 (with some limited exceptions outside of this time, which will be agreed by the charge nurse or clinical nurse manager).

Communicating the visitor guidelines onsite and turning away visitors

Security officers will greet visitors in this circumstance asking them to sign-in using the COVID tracer app and to ensure face coverings are worn. Non-clinical medical masks will be provided at entry if required.

The visitor will then speak to one of our visitor screeners. If a person is not a nominated visitor (and the system has been updated by the ward team) or answers yes to one of the screening questions they will kindly be asked to leave the hospital.

Precautions for visitors to observe

Visitors with symptoms of respiratory tract infection

Visitors with acute respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, sore throat) fever or abdominal pain and diarrhoea must not visit. [Signs are in place at all entrances](#) to reflect this.

If a visitor appears unwell, i.e. presenting with flu-like symptoms, staff should kindly ask them to leave the hospital grounds and advise them to ring Healthline or a General Practitioner (GP) for advice.

Visitors in self-isolation

Anyone who is self-isolating (due to close contact with a confirmed case or due to recent overseas travel) will not be permitted to visit.

While on site, nominated visitors presenting in compassionate circumstances will be required to:

- Scan in using the government's COVID-19 Tracer App or sign in on arrival and provide their contact details.
- Complete the COVID-19 Visitor Screening Form electronically with the screener.
- Follow the [information sheet which will be provided to each visitor](#).
- Acknowledge that they understand and follow appropriate hand hygiene measures.
- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres from staff and other patients wherever possible.
- Restrict their visit to the ward or service area that the patient they are visiting is located in, or to on-site retail areas, for example cafés and the pharmacy.
- Wear a mask at all times.
- Follow dedicated walking areas to ensure physical distancing is maintained whilst onsite.
- Report any other concerns while entering or exiting the hospital to our information kiosk.

Our environment

Entry points into our sites are minimised and health screening will occur for any permitted visitor on site.

There are reduced opportunities for congregation and mixing by the closing of food outlets and non-essential seating.

Patient and area-specific variations

The following variations and conditions for specific patient types and services apply.

1. Support people for outpatient appointments

Patients coming to an Auckland DHB facility for an outpatient appointment are able to bring a support person with them only if required. The same screening process will apply in this instance.

2. Visitors for patients with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis or a high suspicion of COVID-19

Where there is a suspected case of COVID-19, there will be no visitors until the diagnosis is confirmed. If there is a high index of suspicion and tests are negative, the no visiting policy will still apply until an alternative diagnosis is made.

Visiting a patient who has been admitted with COVID-19 and is considered infectious is only permitted at the discretion of the clinical nurse manager or senior clinician who is managing the patient. If permitted this will be under the supervision of nursing staff to ensure personal protection equipment processes are adhered to, and to minimise any risk of avoidable transmission. Other methods of communicating with a patient with COVID-19 should be facilitated as appropriate, such as video conference, Zoom, Skype etc.

Before any visitor is allowed to enter an area where there are COVID-19 positive patients, they must be met by an appropriate staff member who will ensure personal hygiene requirements are met, and Personal Protection Equipment is appropriately worn.

Before admitting access, a risk assessment will be undertaken and the visitor will be informed of the risks and controls for the visit.

Where access is permitted, the nominated visitor will be:

- supported in the donning and doffing and correct use of PPE.
- accompanied at all times by a nurse to validate the appropriate use of PPE and ensure the safety of the visitor.
- considered a casual contact following the visit; and
- escorted by security from the hospital after their visit.

The ward will advise ARPHS of the visitor's casual contact (including an email to ARPHS emergency operations team arphsops@ahdb.govt.nz) and advise the visitor that ARPHS will be in contact to follow-up. The DHB will advise ARPHS of any PPE breaches that impact on risk profile of the visitor.

3. Mental Health and Addiction Services

Mental health services will follow this visitor policy with some additional components:

- Visiting will be determined by the whaiora's current clinical presentation and will be agreed on a case by case basis.
- Face to face visiting will be substituted by video calls where possible, a tablet will be made available for whaiora to use to contact whānau members.

Individual visiting rooms will be identified and used in Te Whetu Tawera, Buchanan Rehab Centre, Fraser McDonald Unit and the Child and Family Unit. Visits will be planned in advance using a booking system. These, and other physical locations, will be risk assessed and managed in a way which minimises risk of COVID transmission

4. Maternity Services

- A single consistent support person must be nominated from birth to post birth care.
- Assessment on WAU: One support person can attend for assessment and during early induction in support of the woman. They must remain in the one room and follow staff advice.
- Birthing: One support person may attend throughout labour and birth until transfer to the postnatal ward/leaving the operating theatre.
- Antenatal clinic visits: No support person may attend except on compassionate grounds

- Postnatal wards: The single nominated support person must stay in the room (or bed space in shared rooms) allocated to the person they are visiting. Support people may only visit between 7am & 8pm.
- Request for discretionary consideration for changes to the above on compassionate grounds should be discussed with the midwife in charge

5. Emergency department

- Patients may be allowed one support person in the department, on compassionate grounds, to assist with diagnosis and treatment. Once disposition in ED has been decided the patient whānau visitor guideline is applied.

6. Clinical Decision Unit

- Patients may be allowed one support person in CDU, on compassionate grounds, to assist with diagnosis and treatment. Once disposition has been decided the patient whānau visitor guideline is applied.

7. Starship Hospital

To help protect patients, whānau and staff, we are restricting the number of tamariki and whānau visiting Starship as below:

- Parents or caregivers only to visit.
- Only one parent or caregiver can be present at a time, except during a handover period where two parents may be present for no more than two hours.
- No tamariki, including brothers and sisters under 14 years are allowed to visit.

Resources to support

- [Visitor information sheet](#) – after screening
- [Screening questions](#)
- [Script for visitor screeners](#)
- [Escalation pathway for screeners](#)
- [Visitor policy poster](#)

This guidance has been written with advice taken by:

- Ministry of Health COVID-19 Hospital & Clinic Patient Visiting Policy
- Health & Safety Representatives from Te Toka Tumai
- Auckland DHB Incident Management Team

Orange Hospital Impact Whānau and Visitors Policy V8

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