

COVID-19

Inpatient Visitation Principles for hospital visitation during Provincial Response Level RED

Background

Efforts to prevent, quickly identify and contain “outbreaks” of COVID-19 are vital to protecting populations that are most vulnerable to serious outcomes from this virus. To date, Manitobans’ efforts have been effective in prevention of COVID-19 outbreaks in the province’s hospitals. Visitor restrictions, enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfecting practices, daily staff screening before staff enter the workplace, and adherence to provincial personal protective equipment requirements have been sequential and escalating steps in Manitoba’s response to COVID-19. Each preventive measure has involved significant consideration of the impact it would have on patient populations.

Balancing necessary preventative measures with maintaining the vital connections that patients have with family members and support systems are top priorities as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve. While preventing the spread of this virus within our facilities remains a central priority, the likelihood that COVID-19 will be a part of our “new normal” for a longer duration requires us to find a longer-term balance between preventative measures and the many benefits of interaction between patients and their loved ones.

Inpatient Visits

During Level RED restrictions, visitor access for inpatients in hospitals is to be restricted.

The following considerations and precautions should be followed:

- For **most inpatients**, visitors should not be permitted.
 - If a patient’s length of stay reaches 14 days **AND** discharge is unlikely to occur in the next 72 hours, one designated support people can be identified to visit and will be allowed to visit (with appropriate screening and precautions) for the remainder of the patient’s stay in hospital.
- **For most inpatients**, visitors should not be permitted. Exceptions will be made to allow a second visitor under the age of 14 accompanied by an adult. Case-by-case exceptions will also be considered and are detailed below. **Refer to Case-by-Case Exceptions.**
- Permitted visits should occur during facility visiting hours.
- Permitted visitors should be asked to sign in at the time of their visit(s). This information will be retained solely for the purpose of Public Health contact tracing should a COVID-19 case investigation be required within a unit.
- Once screened, visitors should proceed to the care unit nursing station.
- **Visitors will follow precautions**, including:
 - Hand hygiene upon entry to facility and before/after contact with healthcare workers or healthcare environment.
 - Wear a mask at all times (visitor to bring and wear a non-medical mask for the duration of their visit unless directed to wear facility-provided procedure mask).

- Maintain physical distance of six feet, two meters.
- Facilities may need to limit the number of visitors in a unit or in the facility at any one time. Limits are at the discretion of the facility operator and should be clearly communicated to visitors.
- Visits to Orange or Red Zone patients/units continue to be restricted. Exceptions are detailed in **Case-by-Case Exceptions** below.
- Visits to Red Zone patients should be limited to end of life exceptions only.
- Visitors approved for Orange or Red Zone patients and/or units will be provided with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). For additional information on PPE refer to **Case-by-Case Exceptions** below.
- Restrictions continue to apply to visitors who have travelled outside of Manitoba within the past 14 days (excluding travel to Western Canada, the Territories or Ontario west of Terrace Bay). In addition, no visitor shall be permitted if they have any cold/flu or other COVID-19 symptoms or have had close contact with a confirmed.
- Additional information, including potential exceptions to be considered on a case-by-case basis are listed below. Refer to **Ongoing Visitor Restrictions and Current Screening Requirements**.

Visits by Transport Workers or “Essential Travelers”

- A visitor or designated support person’s occupation may require essential travel outside of Manitoba (e.g. truck driver or transport worker) and may mean they are unable to pass the screening requirements related to travel.
- In certain situations, including labour and delivery, pediatrics and end of life care, one designated support person may be identified to visit an inpatient
- For designated support persons who are employed in occupations that are exempt from the requirement to isolate upon return to Manitoba and are asymptomatic, the following should be followed:

Visitors will follow precautions, including:

- Hand hygiene upon entry to facility and before/after contact with healthcare workers or healthcare environment.
- Wear a mask at all times (facility to provide a procedure mask).
- Maintain physical distance of six feet, two meters.

Visits to Labour and Delivery:

- The patient should be designated ORANGE and managed within the COVID-19 suspect patient (orange zone) protocol, for the duration of the transport worker/essential traveler’s visit, understanding that physical distancing between visitor, patient and baby will not be maintained.
- After the visit concludes, the patient may be treated as a GREEN zone patient.

Visits to Other Areas:

- In all other areas, visits must follow the established Visitor Restrictions. For permitted visitors, if physical distancing can be maintained, appropriate PPE is worn, and adequate hand hygiene is performed, the patient may remain designated as a GREEN zone patient. If physical distancing cannot be maintained e.g., a parent with a child in pediatrics, the child should be designated as an ORANGE zone patient for the duration of the essential traveler’s visit.

Duration

- Duration of visits in **labour and delivery** will be assessed on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the facility.
- For **all other areas**, duration of the visit will be at the discretion of the facility/unit staff but is not to exceed two hours.

Case-by-Case Exceptions

Additional visitors may be permitted on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the clinical team and/or facility. These include:

- **Labour and Delivery** – a woman may identify one designated support person. Following the birth of the baby, visits from one designated support person is permitted.
- **Pediatrics** – as parents are the substitute decision-makers for their children and as they frequently provide essential childcare support, two designated caregivers may visit every day, regardless of the child's length of stay. One parent may remain overnight with the child.
- **End of Life Care** – consideration will be given to the stage of illness, projected timing of death and trajectory of expected decline. The decision related to when an individual is reaching their end of life will be informed by the care team and is unique to the circumstances of each individual. While difficult to be precise around when an individual is at end of life, this generally refers to the last two weeks of life.

During the last two weeks of life (rapid decline with an estimated survival of less than two weeks), a maximum of two designated support people may be identified to visit. One designated support person may visit within a 24-hour time frame (both may visit at the same time provided physical distancing requirements can be maintained).

- **COVID-19 Suspect Patients or Units (Orange Zone)** – In certain situations, one visitor to an inpatient in one of the three exempted categories above (L&D, pediatrics, end of life care), who is suspected to have COVID-19 will be permitted. The following safety precautions will be in effect:
 - Clinical team will determine whether a visit is permitted by conducting a risk assessment. If a visit is deemed permissible, visitors will be informed of the risks of visiting.
 - During the visit, designated support person will be required to wear personal protective equipment and will follow the directions provided by facility/unit staff.
 - Visitors will be restricted to once per day during visiting hours. Duration of the visit will be at the discretion of facility/unit staff but is not to exceed two hours.
 - Following a visit, follow-up with Public Health officials may occur as the visitor may be considered a possible close contact.

- **COVID-19 Positive Patients (Red Zone)** - In general, visitors will not be allowed to visit COVID-19 positive patients or enter COVID-19 positive units. Exceptions will only be granted for end of life circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
 - PPE must be worn and staff must be satisfied the visitor is able to safely remove personal protective equipment without contaminating themselves.
 - Visiting is discouraged during the first eight days of the illness.
 - Following a visit, follow-up with Public Health officials may occur as the visitor may be considered a possible close contact.

- **Emergency Departments**

One visitor or designated support person may be necessary and permitted in the emergency department for the following reasons:

 - Assisting with medical history, collateral history, consent and decision making
 - Translation when a translator cannot be accessed through the phone service
 - Patients who normally have constant care or attendants
 - Complex discharge instructions
 - Critically ill or critically injured
 - End of life (2 visitors at a time) may be permitted

To facilitate visiting and support the following considerations should be followed

 - To maintain physical distancing, department layout and activity may require limiting the total number of visitors and will be at the discretion of staff
 - Length of visit is at the discretion of staff based on patient and department status and will be communicated to visitor and patient
 - Visits to COVID-19 positive or suspect continue to be restricted with the following exceptions:
 - End of life situations
 - Follow PPE guidelines for orange and red zones
 - Exceptions will be made to allow a second visitor under the age of 14 accompanied by an adult for critically ill or end of life situations.
 - All visitors and designated support persons are to sign in at the time of their visit with information being retained for purpose of contact tracing should a COVID-19 case investigation be required within the department

- **CancerCare Manitoba** - visitor restrictions related to patients who require assistance to access ongoing treatment will continue to be approached on a case-by-case basis.

Hair Salons

Where facilities offer hair salon services, hairdressers are not currently permitted.

Ongoing Visitor Restrictions and Current Screening Requirements

For all visits, screening of all visitors must occur, including assessment for symptoms or known exposure to COVID-19 prior to entry.

The following individuals should **NOT** be permitted as a visitor at **any health care facility**.

Those who have:

- Had close contact with someone who is a confirmed COVID-19 case;
- Been instructed to self-isolate;
- Any cold or flu-like symptoms (cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat, weakness or headache).

All visitors must comply with Infection Prevention and Control measures. This includes strict hand hygiene and maintaining physical distancing (6 feet/2 meters apart) at all times.

Visitors may be required to wear medical PPE at the direction of the care team. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

All visitors will be treated with compassion and understanding.

Visiting hours will be determined by the facility and should consider evening visitation for some portion of approved visitor hours, due to visitors' schedules.

Visitor guidelines may be adjusted based on pandemic protocols. **In collaboration with Public Health, Operators will determine the need to suspend all visits in the case of a confirmed/potential COVID-19 outbreak in the facility or local area or upon the direction of the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer.**

Updates:

October 30, 2020 – Addition of Pandemic Response Level Red Guidelines

- Updates to number of designated support persons for Inpatients Visits
- Updates to number of designated support persons for Labour and Delivery
- Updates to number of designated support persons for End of Life Care
- Removal of Outdoor Visits Guidelines
- Updates to Hair Salon Guidelines

August 19, 2020 – Addition of Hair Salon Guidelines