
All District Health Boards

Type: National Policy

Name: COVID-19 Hospital & Clinic Visitor Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction on access by the public to all DHB hospital campuses during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

This policy serves to protect patients / whānau, staff, and the public through limiting visitors to all patients in our hospitals.

Scope

This policy refers to all DHB facilities where patients are cared for.

This policy is active until the Ministry of Health declares the pandemic is over.

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
- Non-essential visitors.

Excludes:

Exclusions will be limited. 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
- 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 family / whanau, off-duty staff.
- Whānau spokesperson – the single point of contact for the whanau.
- High risk area – Emergency Departments (ED), Intensive Care Units/High Dependency Units (ICU/HDU), Aged Care 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.

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Guiding Principles

There is an expectation that:

- All staff will maintain respectful communication with families / whānau, treating each person with dignity and respect
- All staff will partner with families / whānau regarding this policy
- All staff will work with Māori and Pacific health teams to ensure cultural aspects of care are actioned
- Whānau liaison increases as the response level increases
- Alternative means of communication between patients and whanau/ families are encouraged and enabled.
- DHBs will minimise the number of access points into their facilities.

Policy content and guidelines

Visitors with symptoms of respiratory tract infection

Visitors with acute respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, sore throat) or fever must not visit. Signage should be 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.

Patients admitted with 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 a diagnosis is made.

Visiting patients who have been admitted with COVID-19 is only permitted at the discretion of the Clinical Nurse Manager or senior clinician who is managing the patient and under the supervision of nursing staff. The reason for this is 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.

Patients / whānau must designate a whānau spokesperson who will be the point of contact for the whānau regarding the visiting policy and any changes to it. This is in case response levels rise and further restrictions need to be applied.

A poster must be placed on the wall at entry points to instruct visitors to maintain good hygiene, including washing hands on entry and exit. The poster should also explain the level of restriction at the time.

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.

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Visitors in self-isolation

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

Visitors register

Names and contact details of visitors will be recorded in a sign in book at the points of entry.

Specialty units

If existing visiting policies within specialty units is more rigorous than stated in this policy, they should be followed.

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COVID-19 Hospital Readiness GREEN ALERT LEVEL ONE	Visitors to high risk areas: (ED/Intensive Care Unit (ICU)/NICU/SCBU/ Maternity/Aged Care or any ward with COVID-19 positive patients	<p>Visitors with known COVID-19 contact or symptoms will not be granted access and will be directed to Community Based Assessment Centre (CBAC) or to contact Healthline or GP.</p> <p>Visitors with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be able to enter. A maximum of one visitor at a time will be allowed, for one visit per day.</p> <p><i>For maternity services:</i> where there is no suspicion of COVID-19 for either the patient or visitors, up to two visitors (one partner and one birthing partner) can accompany patients into the birthing suite.</p>
	Visitors to all other areas	<p>Visitors with known COVID-19 contact or symptoms will not be granted access and will be directed to Community Based Assessment Centre (CBAC) or to contact Healthline or GP.</p> <p>Visitors with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be able to enter. A maximum of two visitors at any one time may visit a patient at the hospital or clinic.</p> <p>Usual visiting hours are adhered to, unless by prior arrangement with the ward.</p> <p>Children under 16 must not visit except by prior arrangement.</p>
COVID-19 Hospital Initial Impact YELLOW ALERT LEVEL TWO	As per Green Alert	As per Green Alert
COVID-19 Hospital Moderate Impact ORANGE ALERT LEVEL THREE	Visitors to high risk areas: (ED/ICU/NICU/SCBU/Maternity/ Aged Care or any ward with COVID-19 positive patients	<p>Visitors with known COVID-19 contact or symptoms will not be granted access and will be directed to CBAC or to contact Health line or GP.</p> <p>Visitors with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be able to enter. A maximum of one visitor at a time will be allowed, for one visit per day.</p> <p><i>For maternity services:</i> where there is no suspicion of COVID-19 for either the patient or visitors, up to two visitors (one partner and one birthing partner) can accompany patients into the birthing suite.</p>
	Visitors to all other areas	<p>Visitors with known COVID-19 contact or symptoms will not be granted access and will be directed to CBAC or to contact Health line or GP.</p> <p>Visitors with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be able to enter. A maximum of one visitor at any one time may visit a patient at the hospital or clinic.</p> <p>Formal visiting hours are adhered to, unless by prior arrangement with the ward.</p> <p>No non-essential visitors.</p>
COVID-19 Hospital Severe Impact RED ALERT LEVEL FOUR	All areas	<p>No visitors to be granted access unless approved by the Clinical Nurse Manager or senior manager on shift. A maximum of one visitor or legal guardian that has been screened will be granted access if approved.</p>