



# COVID-19 Public hospital visitor guidelines

## Background

Delivering safe healthcare as well as protecting patients, families and staff is the number one priority of all hospital service providers. In light of recent changes to COVID-19 measures and restrictions, all public hospitals are changing visitor guidelines. These guidelines will continue to change as other COVID-19 measures and restrictions evolve to ensure we protect our most vulnerable populations and staff from the spread of COVID-19.

This guideline aims to provide:

- a framework for how to manage visitors to adult, children and maternity patients in **hospital** settings across the State
- an outline of the key messages to communicate to consumers for all Health Service Providers (HSP's).

## Key COVID-19 messaging for all visitors entering a hospital

It is a requirement that all visitors entering a hospital environment adhere to key government recommendations with regards to COVID-19, including adherence to physical distancing at all times. Visitors are not permitted to enter a hospital if they have:

- tested positive for coronavirus;
- a fever or a cold or a flu-like illness, including symptoms such as sore throat, cough, fatigue and difficulty breathing;
- travelled outside Western Australia and are therefore required to self-isolate for 14 days after date of return to Western Australia; and/or
- been in contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus and are therefore required to self-isolate for 14 days.

Any visitor to a hospital who does not comply with the above requirements, including adherence to physical distancing at all times will be required to leave the hospital immediately.

All visitors are required to **keep our patients safe** through good personal hygiene and physical distancing:

- **wash hands** often with soap and water or hand sanitiser
- **cover coughs** and sneezes with a tissue or cough into your inner elbow
- **keep safe physical distance of 1.5 metres** between yourself and others and refrain from physical contact at all times.

## Staying socially connected in hospital during COVID-19

Where possible, health staff should discuss and support alternative means of communication for people who would otherwise visit patients, such as virtual communications including phone, and video-communication [1].

## Visitor requirements for adult, children and maternity patients

Visitor requirements outlined below are always subject to adherence to physical distancing and related site-specific guidance.

### Visitors to adults and children

- **Inpatients** – Maximum of two visitors for each patient at one time, during standard visiting hours.

### Visitors to maternity patients

- **Visitors for delivery and postnatal wards** - Two birthing partners are permitted to attend with a woman in labour. The same two birth partners can progress to the postnatal wards in line with standard visiting hours.
- **Inpatients** - Maximum of two visitors for each patient at one time, during standard visiting hours.

### Visitors to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 inpatients

- **Adults and Maternity** - No visitors will be allowed to visit confirmed or suspected COVID-19 adult inpatients unless exceptional circumstances have been agreed with senior clinical staff.
- **Children** - For children who are inpatients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, a maximum of one designated family member is able to visit per day. This must be the same visitor each day. In circumstances where the designated visitor is unable to attend an alternative visitor can be agreed with senior clinical staff.
- Visitors may be allowed if a patient's room has a viewable window where curtains can be opened to enable a visitor and patient to interact safely.

## Exceptional circumstances to visitor restrictions

There may be exceptional circumstances where the application of these visitor guidelines should be reconsidered. All exceptional circumstances will be considered in discussion with a patient's treating team, and will

- Be determined on a case-by-case basis and consider individual circumstances;
- Include an assessment of the risk and benefits to all individuals involved.

### Visitors to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients during delivery

- The individual HSP will consider a support person during birth on a case by case basis.
- Approved support persons must abide by the specific directions and instructions of senior clinical staff, for example the use of personal protective equipment during birth.

### Visitors to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients requiring end of life care

- The individual HSP will consider visitors on compassionate grounds on a case by case basis.
- Approved visitors must abide by the specific directions and instructions of senior clinical staff, for example the use of personal protective equipment when visiting.

### **Visitors who are in mandatory self-isolation**

- Visitors who are in mandatory self-isolation will be considered (on a case by case basis) by HSPs on compassionate grounds.
- Approved visitors must abide by the specific directions and instructions of senior clinical staff, for example the use of personal protective equipment when visiting.

### **Visitor screening at some HSPs**

- Some HSPs may be undertaking visitor screening, and refusal to support this process may result in declined entry.

## **Authority**

Department of Health Western Australia.

These guidelines are based on the current available knowledge of the transmission of coronaviruses and may change as more evidence becomes available specifically regarding COVID-19.

## **References**

1. Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia. Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Group (WAAAG) for COVID-19 meeting In: Public of Aboriginal Health Division. Perth, WA: Department of Health; 2020.

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