



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
NHH COVID-19 Visitor Policy Update – Effective Tuesday, February 22, 2022

Q. 1 How many visitors are admitted patients (“inpatients”) allowed to have at NHH today?

NHH is currently restricting visiting on inpatient units to a maximum of one visitor or essential caregiver for each admitted patient per day, between the hours of 8AM and 8PM. Exceptions to the one person and 8AM to 8PM rule continue as follows:

- For inpatients at imminent end of life additional visitors will be considered at the discretion of the care team
- For obstetrical patients, the birth partner AND labour coach will be permitted
- For outpatients, the following exceptions are permitted:
 - a. Essential caregivers for children coming to the hospital for care (children = 18 and under)
 - b. Essential caregivers for those with communication challenges and/or cognitive impairments – outpatient settings only (Emergency Department visits, Diagnostic Imaging tests, etc.)

Visiting continues to be on hold for inpatients whose room is located in a COVID-19 hot zone (i.e. a unit designated in a COVID-19 ‘outbreak’ status by Public Health) OR confirmed or presumed positive for COVID-19.

Q. 2 How do I know if the hospital is experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak? This is information I would like to know before I visit.

NHH publicly reports updates on the total number of COVID-19 cases among patients and staff on its website, including any outbreak situations. While subject to change, the information is currently updated three times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. See the COVID-19 section of our website, nhh.ca/covid-19, for details.

Q. 3 What are the visiting hours?

Effective Tuesday, February 22, visiting hours will return to 12 hours/day, 8AM to 8PM. There are no visiting hour restrictions for those considered ‘exceptions’ to the one person and 8AM – 8PM rule (eg, visitor to a patient at imminent end of life, essential caregiver to an outpatient in the Emergency Department or birth partner to an obstetrical patient).

Q. 4 Are visits permitted to patients receiving care within the Emergency Department?

Yes, one visitor or essential caregiver (18 years of age or older) per patient per day, is permitted for Emergency Department patients, within the restrictions set out in the COVID-19 Visitor Policy. There are no visiting ‘hours’ within the Emergency Department as there are on inpatient units.

Q. 5 Some hospitals have limited visiting to one designated visitor only. Is this NHH’s policy?

Yes, with limited exceptions, one visitor/essential caregiver per admitted inpatient is permitted each day. Exceptions to the number of visitors (i.e. more than one visitor) may be made for patients who are at imminent end-of-life, at the discretion of the care team and for obstetrical patients who may have a primary partner AND labour coach if desired. It is the responsibility of each patient (or their substitute decision maker) to select who they wish their in-person visitor/essential caregiver to be, and communicate that wish to the rest of their family/social circle in advance of visitors’ arrival to avoid people having to be turned away at the entrance. If a patient wishes to have different individuals visit them or support them during the course of their stay, then they should plan in advance the day that each will come in.

Q. 6 Do I still need to wear a mask if I visit a patient at NHH?

Yes. Universal masking continues throughout NHH and it will be strictly enforced. Those coming into the hospital will be provided with a mask to use during their time on-site and it is recommended that this mask be discarded on exit. Anyone found not compliant with the universal mask policy—or other personal protective equipment requirements specific to the patient they are visiting—will be required to leave.

Q. 7 If I have been vaccinated, do I still need to be screened/wear a mask?

Yes. Visitors who have been vaccinated for COVID-19 must pass the screening process and will be expected to follow all required infection prevention and control practices within the hospital, including the wearing of any recommended personal protective equipment.

Q. 8 I have a loved one in hospital, and I am worried about what they may be exposed to as a result of this relaxing of visitor restrictions. What infection control measures have you put in place to reduce the risk of visitors entering the hospital?

Visitors will be expected to wear a mask for the duration of their visit and wash their hands on entry and exit (and repeatedly through their visit, as required). Visitors will also be expected to restrict their movement when inside the hospital as much as possible, i.e. to the patient room and to refrain from eating and drinking while on-site, given the need to remove the mask to do so. Active screening is also in place prior to entry. This involves the successful completion of a series of questions regarding symptoms and potential exposure to COVID-19 positive cases. Finally, as an additional protection for vulnerable inpatients, NHH is also piloting the use of Rapid Antigen Tests for those visiting inpatients as part of the screening process. The Rapid Antigen Test will be supplied on entry to applicable visitors.

Visitors/essential caregivers who receive a positive result on their Rapid Antigen Test will not be permitted to visit and will instead be redirected to the NHH COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Centre for support, testing and assessment as appropriate. The use of Rapid Antigen Testing—now permitted as a result of increased supply—is not expected to be permanent. NHH will monitor the volume of asymptomatic positive patients picked up through the proactive surveillance, together with data on the spread of COVID-19 within the hospital and community, and adjust the process as required.

Q. 9 How long will the Rapid Antigen Testing be required?

As part of our existing screening process, NHH is piloting the use of Rapid Antigen Testing as an additional protection for vulnerable inpatients. The use of Rapid Antigen Testing is not expected to be permanent. NHH will monitor the volume of asymptomatic positive individuals picked up through the proactive surveillance, together with data on the spread of COVID-19 within the hospital and community, and adjust the process as required.

Q. 10 I have a loved one receiving chemotherapy treatments. Can I join them now for their treatment?

NHH continues to restrict outpatient visitors to 'essential only'. Unless your loved one has specific needs to support them during their appointment (for example, requires support getting in/out of the hospital for their appointment) general visiting to patients within our outpatient clinics, including chemotherapy and dialysis, is not permitted at this time.

Q. 11 What if the patient is unable to identify that they wish to have a visitor?

In situations where the patient is not able to communicate, their substitute decision maker is expected to determine who will visit each day and communicate this to the care team.

Q. 12 What if I have had a negative COVID-19 swab just prior to visiting? Do I still need to take the hospital's Rapid Antigen Test?

Yes. NHH will require all visitors to inpatients to conduct a new RAT prior to entry. This RAT will be provided by NHH and administered on site. Those who fail the screening will not be permitted to visit and will be referred to the COVID-19 Assessment Clinic (or Emergency Department) for assessment.

Q. 13 What door should I come in/go out if I'm visiting an inpatient?

Visitors to those admitted to an inpatient bed should enter/exit at the main front entrance, between the hours of 8AM and 8PM, to minimize traffic into the Emergency Department and through the hospital.

Those arriving outside of these visiting hours will be required to enter via the Emergency Department entrance. All visitors will be asked to sign in on arrival, and to provide their name and contact information to support any necessary contact tracing.

Q. 14 Is the cafeteria open to the public?

Yes, the Main Street Bistro is open weekdays and public service is available. For hours of operation please see the hospital website.

Q. 15 Can I bring food, such as a coffee or tea, in to my loved one?

No. To minimize the risk of infection introduced when consuming food/drink in patient care areas, visitors are not permitted to bring food and drink into the hospital at this time.

Q. 16 I live in another province, and cannot visit in person at all. Will the Virtual Visiting service continue to be available?

Yes, the Virtual Visiting program introduced in April 2020 continues to be available. Virtual visits may be scheduled weekdays by contacting the hospital's Virtual Visiting Team at 905-372-6811 ext. 3146 or by email to virtualconnections@nhh.ca. Note: to protect patient privacy, the patient's full name should not be included in the email. For full details, please refer to our website at: <https://nhh.ca/Patients/VisitingGuidelines>

Q. 17 I have a question or concern regarding your Visitor Policy. Who should this be directed to?

Any individual patient and/or visitor with questions or concerns regarding the COVID-19 Visitor Policy is encouraged to contact the manager of the patient care unit during business hours. In the event a visitor-related concern arises outside of business hours, when unit managers are not typically on site, the Clinical Operations Manager has been designated as the point person responsible for addressing questions regarding visiting, in consultation with NHH's Patient Relations Manager or manager/senior manager on call.

Q. 18 Is this COVID-19 Visitor Policy subject to change?

Yes. Our team is constantly monitoring the total volume of traffic into and out of the hospital to ensure physical distancing requirements can be maintained, as well as any sign of hospital-acquired infection connected to visiting. In the event it is found necessary for safety purposes, the hospital will limit visiting once again. It remains our goal to maintain a safe balance between limited visiting/essential caregiver presence and infection control and ultimately return to the open visitor policy in place prior to the pandemic.

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