

Preamble

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) will update its visitor policy to reflect the most recent guidance/directives from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Please reference ministry guidelines found here:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/operational_requirements_health_sector.pdf

Purpose

The purpose of the policy, developed with input from NHH's Patient and Family Advisory Council, and guidance published by the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, is to define a phased process for the safe coordination of visitor and family caregiver presence during the pandemic. Any change to visitor access requires thoughtful and slow integration, keeping a balance with our core guiding principles which are: to decrease risk of exposure; ensure appropriate allocation of resources; and improve the patient experience.

Policy

NHH has taken steps to limit the number of individuals entering the hospital. NHH recognizes that visitor and family caregiver presence is integral to patient safety, the healing process, the patient's medical and psychological well-being, comfort, and quality of life. The hospital's readiness to accept visitors is continuously evaluated based on many factors, including the risk of outbreak in hospital and community, access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and critical supplies, ability to maintain physical distancing, the volume of people entering the hospital and in consideration of patients, families, and health care providers. Any changes to the status of any one of these factors may impact the length or frequency of visits or the number of visitors permitted into the hospital. Where restrictions are required, priority will be given to the primary family caregiver, as identified by the patient.

While this document aims to provide clarity for visitors during the phases of the pandemic, decisions related to the application of this policy in specific circumstances rest at the discretion of the care team in consultation with the patient and/or their primary family caregiver.

Expectations

The following expectations will be adhered to by all visitors during the pandemic.

The visitor will:

- ✓ Be 16 years or older (visitor under the age of 16 may be allowed for patients at imminent end of life, on approval).
- ✓ Pass the screening criteria upon entry (if failed screening, will go to Assessment Centre)
- ✓ Don a mask (bring their own and wear during the duration of visit) that covers both mouth and nose
- ✓ Clean their hands with hand sanitizer provided. If wearing gloves, will be asked to remove them and discard to ensure hands are cleaned thoroughly.

- ✓ Restrict their presence to patient's bedside only and maintain physical distancing.
- ✓ Not go in and out of patient's room (inpatient)
- ✓ Wear a visitor ID badge
- ✓ Follow COVID-19 visiting hours (recognizing these are subject to change)
- ✓ Use public washrooms only
- ✓ Not bring outside food or drink for the visitor
- ✓ Provide their name and contact information at screening desk.

Phased Approach for Visiting

Phases	Definition	NHH Standard Work
Pre-phase	Onset of pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No visitors • Virtual Connection option
Phase One	During peak periods of pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors will be limited to essential visitors only; those include 1 visitor at a time for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ a patient that is dying or very ill (palliative) ✓ a <i>support</i> for a delivering mother ✓ a parent/guardian of a child (< 16 years old) or primary family caregiver for individual with specific needs • Virtual Connection option
Phase Two	During recovery period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>See table below.</i> • Virtual Connection option • Service animals only, no personal pets/therapeutic animals permitted
Phase Three	End of pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow NHH Visiting Guidelines (non-pandemic)

Phase Two: Visiting During the Recovery Period

Note: decisions related to the application of step two rest at the discretion of the care team, in consultation with the patient, Substitute Decision Maker and/or their primary family caregiver.

Step One (complete as of September 13, 2020)

Guideline	For Inpatient Units Cold zone only*	For Outpatients / Emergency Department
Identifying visitors (who)	Patient identifies	Essential caregiver only
Numbers (how many?)	1 designated only (>16 years) or primary family caregiver for individual with specific needs	
Frequency (how often?)	Weekends only	
Hours of visiting (when)	1300 to 1700	

***No visitors in hot zone**

Step Two (revised as of October 19, 2020)

Guideline	For Inpatient Units Cold zone only*	For Emergency Department Cold zone only*	For Outpatients
Identifying visitors/primary family caregiver	Patient identifies as able – expectation is that patient/family will coordinate who will visit to support the one visitor/day restriction	Patient identifies as able – expectation is that patient/family will coordinate who will visit to support the one visitor/day restriction	Essential caregiver only
Contact tracing	All visitors will be required to sign in at entry	All visitors will be required to sign in at entry	
Numbers (how many?)	1 visitor (>16 years) OR primary family caregiver for individual with specific needs, per patient, per day	1 visitor (>16 years) OR primary family caregiver for individual with specific needs, per patient, per day	
Frequency (how often?)	7 days per week	7 days per week	
Hours of visiting (when)	0800 - 2000	24 hours / day	

Appeal Process

NHH will ensure broad and consistent communication of its COVID-19 Visitor Policy and any amendments or updates. Any individual patient and/or visitor concerns may be directed to the manager of the patient care unit involved for discussion/resolution. In the event a visitor-related concern arises outside of business hours, when unit managers are not on site, the Clinical Operations Manager (COM) will be responsible for addressing the questions, in consultation with the Patient Relations Delegate or manager/senior manager on-call as required.

*Cold zone = inpatient / emergency department areas without COVID-19 patients

**Hot zone = inpatient / emergency department areas with COVID-19 patients

Reference:

[*BETTER TOGETHER: Re-Integration of Family Caregivers as Essential Partners in Care in a Time of COVID-19*](#), Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement – July 2020