

Preamble

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

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 essential caregiver, as identified by the patient.

While this document aims to provide clarity for visitors during all 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 essential caregiver.

Expectations

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

The visitor will:

- ✓ Refrain from visiting confirmed or suspected COVID-19 positive patients
- ✓ 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 screening failed, entry to the hospital will not be permitted)
- ✓ Don a hospital-issued mask that covers both mouth and nose and any necessary PPE required at the time of visit

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Limit movement in/out of patient's room
- ✓ Follow COVID-19 visiting hours where applicable (recognizing these are subject to change)
- ✓ Use public washrooms only (no use of washroom in patient room)
- ✓ Refrain from consuming food in patient room and not bring outside food or drink for the visitor
- ✓ Provide their name and contact information at screening desk to support contact tracing

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 only
Phase One	During peak periods of pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors will be limited to essential visitors/caregivers only; those include 1 visitor at a time for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ a patient who is dying or very ill (palliative) ✓ a <i>support</i> for a delivering mother ✓ a parent/guardian of a child (< 16 years old) or essential caregiver for individual with specific needs • Virtual Connection option • Service animals only, no personal pets/therapeutic animals permitted
Phase Two	During recovery period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual lifting of restrictions set out in Phase One as circumstances permit • 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)

Essential Visitor/Caregiver Identification During Phase 1

	For Inpatient Units Cold zone only*	For Emergency Department Cold zone only*	For Outpatient Departments (eg. DI)	Palliative /End of Life	Obstetrical Patients
Identifying visitors/essential caregivers	Patient identifies essential caregiver as able – expectation is that patient/family will coordinate who will attend to support the one visitor/day restriction	Patient/guardian for minor identifies essential caregiver as able – expectation is that patient/family will coordinate who will attend to support the one visitor/day restriction	Essential caregiver/support only	Patient identifies as able and at the discretion of the care team	Patient identifies essential support partner for birth

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