COVID-19 public hospital visitor guidelines

These guidelines apply in Phase 4 of the COVID-19 response, unless advised otherwise by the Government of Western Australia.

Background

Delivering safe healthcare as well as protecting patients, families and staff is a priority of all hospital service providers in Western Australia (WA). In light of recent changes to COVID-19 measures and restrictions, all public hospitals are changing visitor guidelines. These guidelines will continue to be updated as other COVID-19 measures and restrictions change to ensure we protect the population from the spread of COVID-19.

Key COVID-19 messaging for all visitors entering a hospital

All visitors entering a hospital environment should adhere to key government recommendations and any additional hospital instructions with regards to COVID-19.

Visitors should not be permitted to enter a hospital if they have:
- a current diagnosis of COVID-19;
- a fever or a cold or a flu-like illness, including symptoms such as sore throat, cough, fatigue and difficulty breathing;
- returned to WA and are required to self-quarantine for 14 days;
- been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and are therefore required to self-isolate for 14 days; or
- been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting test results.

For exemptions: see below for exceptional circumstances.

Any visitor to a hospital who does not comply with the above requirements may be required to leave the hospital immediately.

Each hospital in WA has site-specific guidance on the number of visitors and visiting hours. Please refer to their websites for specific details.

Some hospitals may be undertaking visitor screening i.e. asking you if you are currently well, questioning you for any symptoms, and/or taking your temperature. Refusal to support this process may result in declined entry.
All visitors are expected to keep our patients safe by maintaining good personal hygiene and physical distancing where possible:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough into your inner elbow.
- Encourage safe physical distancing of 1.5 metres between each other.

**Staying socially connected in hospital during COVID-19**

Where possible, 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.

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

To protect our population, including hospital staff, from the spread of COVID-19, the following guidance applies to visiting **inpatients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19**:

- **Adults** – Visitors may be allowed where visitation has been agreed to with hospital staff and the Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C) team.
- **Maternity** – One immediate family member may be present during and immediately following birth as a support person.
- **Children** – A maximum of one designated family member/guardian is able to visit per day. This must be the same person each day. In circumstances where the designated person is unable to attend, an alternative person can be agreed upon. In exceptional circumstances, more than one immediate family member/guardian can visit in agreement with staff.
- **Neonates** – A maximum of two designated family members/guardians are able to visit per day and adhere to local hospital advice. These must be the same people each day. In circumstances where a designated person is unable to attend, an alternative person can be agreed upon.
- **Patients requiring end-of-life care** – The individual hospital will consider visitors on compassionate grounds on a case-by-case basis.
- **Individual hospitals** may allow visitors if a patient’s room has a viewing window where curtains can be opened to enable a visitor and patient to interact safely.

Approved visitors/support persons must abide by the specific directions and instructions of hospital staff and the IP&C team, for example the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when visiting.
Exceptional circumstances to visitor restrictions

There may be exceptional circumstances in which the application of these visitor guidelines should be reconsidered. All exceptional circumstances will be considered in discussion with hospital staff and the IP&C team and will:

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

Visitors who have travelled from outside WA in the past 14 days, with exemption for self-quarantine, are requested to phone the hospital in advance to arrange visitation to reduce exposure to others.

Visitors who are in mandatory self-quarantine

- Visitors who are in mandatory self-quarantine will be considered on a case-by-case basis by individual hospitals on compassionate grounds.
- Approved visitors must abide by the specific directions and instructions of hospital staff and the IP&C team, for example the use of PPE when visiting.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version:</th>
<th>Last Updated:</th>
<th>Last reviewed:</th>
<th>Changes:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>17th March 2021</td>
<td>17th March 2021</td>
<td>Clarified guidance for visitors to maternity patients, added guidance for neonates and documented hospital staff as decision makers for visitors, to enable hospitals to make these decisions in line with their processes.</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>7th December 2020</td>
<td>21st December 2020</td>
<td>Nil Changes</td>
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Authority

Department of Health Western Australia.

These guidelines are for staff working in public hospitals in Western Australia. They are based on information available at the time of writing and may change as more information becomes available. These guidelines are a guide only and patients should be managed on a case-by-case basis.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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