



COVID-19

Patient Whānau Visitor Guidelines – Hospital impact yellow

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to set out Te Toka Tumai (Auckland DHB) specific expectations for patient whānau visitors accessing our premises. It serves to protect patients, whānau, staff, and the public through limiting visitors to all patients in our hospitals and outpatient locations.

The vulnerable nature of many of the individuals who access our services means they are at higher risk of the impact of COVID-19. We consider the wellbeing of individual patients alongside the wellbeing and safety of our people and the Te Toka Tumai/Auckland DHB community as a whole.

Te Toka Tumai acknowledges the important and beneficial role whānau play in supporting patients staying in hospital or coming for an appointment. We've listened to feedback from patients and from whānau, from unions and from you. And we think this current guidance provide a balance to keeping people safe and minimising the potential harm to patients when we restrict whānau from visiting.

Nothing in the guide overrides the obligations of members of the public to follow the relevant alert level guidance in place, noting that the provision of healthcare is exempt from the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Orders.

When does this guideline apply?

This guideline applies during the following:

- Hospital impact status: Yellow

There are four visitor guidelines, which determine changes in visitor management.

Movement between levels takes into consideration factors such as:

- Hospital alert level
- Community incidence
- Workforce levels

Includes:

- Public visiting patients within inpatient units
- Public accompanying people to community clinics
- Public accompanying people to any outpatient or ambulatory area/clinic
- Public accompanying people presenting at the emergency department
- Public accompanying people requiring maternity services
- Parents/caregivers accompanying children requiring hospital services

Excludes:

Exclusions will be limited. Charge nurses and clinical nurse managers can assess requests on a case by case basis. For example, exceptions will be considered on compassionate grounds for end of life care.

- This policy excludes patients.
- This policy excludes on duty staff, volunteers and contracted workers performing or providing essential services.

Definitions

- Visitor – Member of the public not receiving assessment, diagnostics or treatment but who is visiting or supporting a patient
- Patient – Member of the public receiving / seeking treatment, this includes mental health service users
- Non-essential visitors – e.g. company representatives, external people attending meetings, people not visiting whānau, off-duty staff.
- Whānau spokesperson – the single point of contact for the whānau.
- High risk area – Emergency departments (ED), intensive care units/high dependency units (ICU/HDU), COVID-19 allocated wards, older peoples' health wards, maternity wards, delivery suite and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), special care baby unit (SCBU), oncology (including chemotherapy areas), renal outpatient and inpatient areas, immunology, or other outpatient areas that have at risk patients as agreed with the incident management team.

Principles

The specific principle of this guideline is to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 for everyone within the hospital environment whilst:

- supporting patients to remain connected with their whānau and loved ones;
- facilitating whānau as partners in patient care.

Te Toka Tumai (Auckland DHB) actively assesses risks that enables a series of risk informed decisions to maintain patient, worker and visitor safety. This visitor guideline is not to be taken in isolation – it is part of a much wider risk assessment associated with the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the organisation.

This guideline adopts a values-based approach that reflects Te Toka Tumai/Auckland DHB's core values of haere mai, manaaki, tūhono and angamua. In particular, it:

- Prioritises the safety of visitors, our patients and workers on site;
- Recognises the importance of whānau as partners in patient care;
- Protects the privacy and autonomy of patients and visitors;
- seeks solutions that keep patients connected with whānau; and
- Strives to provide visitors with clear information and explanations that they can relate to their own circumstances.
- Ensures cultural aspects of care are actioned by working with our Māori health teams and Pacific health teams

General guidance for patient whānau, support people and visitors

Variations to these general restrictions for specific patient diagnoses and specific areas are detailed below.

We know our patients and whānau need support during their time in hospital. Each patient has the following in order to be able to provide support but also to manage the care environment safely:

- Has two nominated visitors
- One visitor will be able to visit each day
- Visiting time will be arranged in partnership with the clinical teams and patient requirements
- Patients or whānau must designate a whānau spokesperson who will be the point of contact for the whānau regarding the visiting policy and any changes to it. This is in case response levels rise and further restrictions need to be applied.

What is the process?

- The patient nominates up to two names
- The names are entered by the ward clerk into our screening system as an approved visitors
- This sends a QR code to the individual to be shown on arrival at the Hospital

Visiting hours

To enable the safe management of visitors onto Auckland DHB inpatient facilities, visiting hours will be limited to 07.00 to 20.00 (with some limited exceptions outside of this time, which will be provided by the charge nurse or clinical nurse manager).

Compassionate exceptions

In addition to the general guidance above, exceptions may be made for compassionate reasons, for example to increase the number of whānau supported to visit.

In making exemptions on compassionate grounds, consideration will be given to factors, including but not limited to:

- Carers of a patient with a disability or cognitive impairment
- Support people for those who can't communicate for themselves
- Whānau of long-stay inpatients
- Whānau of patients whose condition has worsened
- Whānau of patients at or near end of life
- Whānau who are unable to maintain contact using alternative modes, for example lack of access to technology
- When breaking bad news or discussing/agreeing treatment plans where whānau support is required

Supporting Safe Visiting

Every day Te Toka Tumai's (Auckland DHB) teams manage whānau, support people and visitors in their clinical areas. Please consider the use of the below if larger numbers are visiting:

- Whānau rooms
- Empty bed bays

- If appropriate, kindly asking visiting sessions to end so other visitors can be present

Communicating the visitor guidelines onsite and turning away visitors

Security officers will greet visitors asking them to sign-in using the COVID tracer app and to ensure face coverings are worn. Non-clinical medical masks will be provided at entry. The visitor will then speak to one of our visitor screeners, and a sticker identifying them as a visitor will be provided to wear while on site.

If a person is not a nominated visitor or answers yes to one of the screening questions they will kindly be asked to leave the hospital.

Precautions for visitors to observe

Visitors with symptoms of respiratory tract infection

Visitors with acute respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, sore throat) fever or abdominal pain and diarrhoea must not visit. [Signs are in place at all entrances](#) to reflect this.

If a visitor appears unwell, i.e. presenting with flu-like symptoms, staff should kindly ask them to leave the hospital grounds and advise them to ring Healthline or a General Practitioner (GP) for advice.

Visitors in self-isolation

Anyone who is self-isolating (due to close contact with a confirmed case or due to recent overseas travel) will not be permitted to visit.

While on site, nominated visitors will be required to:

- Scan in using the government's COVID-19 Tracer App or sign in on arrival and provide their contact details.
- Complete the COVID-19 Visitor Screening Form electronically with the screener
- Follow the [information sheet which will be provided to each visitor](#) -
- Acknowledge that they understand and follow appropriate hand hygiene measures
- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres from staff and other patients wherever possible
- Restrict their visit to the ward or service area that the patient they are visiting is located in, or to on-site retail areas, for example cafés and the pharmacy.
- Wear a mask at all times.
- Follow dedicated walking areas to ensure physical distancing is maintained whilst onsite
- Report any other concerns while entering or exiting the hospital to our information kiosk

Our environment

Entry points into our sites are minimised and health screening will occur for any permitted visitor on site

There are reduced opportunities for congregation and mixing by the closing of food outlets and non-essential seating

Patient and area-specific variations

The following variations and conditions for specific patient types and services apply.

1. Support people for outpatient appointments

Patients coming to a Te Toka Tumai (Auckland DHB) facility for an outpatient appointment are able to bring a support person with them if required. The same screening process will apply in this instance.

2. Visitors for patients with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis or a high suspicion of COVID-19

Where there is a suspected case of COVID-19, there will be no visitors until the diagnosis is confirmed. If there is a high index of suspicion and tests are negative, the no visiting policy will still apply until an alternative diagnosis is made.

Visiting a patient who has been admitted with COVID-19 and is considered infectious is only permitted at the discretion of the clinical nurse manager or senior clinician who is managing the patient. If permitted this will be under the supervision of nursing staff to ensure personal protection equipment processes are adhered to, and to minimise any risk of avoidable transmission. Other methods of communicating with a patient with COVID-19 should be facilitated as appropriate, such as video conference, Zoom, Skype etc.

Before any visitor is allowed to enter an area where there are COVID-19 positive patients, they must be met by an appropriate staff member who will ensure personal hygiene requirements are met, and Personal Protection Equipment is appropriately worn.

Before admitting access, a risk assessment will be undertaken and the visitor will be informed of the risks and controls for the visit.

Where access is permitted, the nominated visitor will be:

- supported in the donning and doffing and correct use of PPE
- accompanied at all times by a nurse to validate the appropriate use of PPE and ensure the safety of the visitor
- considered a casual contact following the visit; and
- escorted by security from the hospital after their visit

The ward will advise ARPHS of the visitor's casual contact (including an email to ARPHS emergency operations team arphsops@ahdb.govt.nz) and advise the visitor that ARPHS will be in contact to follow-up. The DHB will advise ARPHS of any PPE breaches that impact on risk profile of the visitor.

3. Mental Health and Addiction Services

Mental health services will follow this visitor policy with some additional components:

- Visiting will be determined by the whaiora's current clinical presentation and will be agreed on a case by case basis.
- Face to face visiting will be substituted by video calls where possible, a tablet will be made available for whaiora to use to contact whānau members.

Individual visiting rooms will be identified and used in Te Whetu Tawera, Buchanan Rehab Centre, Fraser McDonald Unit and the Child and Family Unit. Visits will be planned in advance using a booking system. These, and other physical locations, will be risk assessed and managed in a way which minimises risk of COVID transmission

4. Maternity Services

- Birthing or Assessment on WAU: One person can attend for assessment and during early induction in support of the woman. Up to two birth partners may attend throughout labour and birth until transfer to the postnatal ward.
- Antenatal clinic visits. One support person may attend.
- Post-natal Ward: 2 nominated visitors visiting one at a time (The nominated visitors should be the same as the birth support people). Able to visit from 7am to 8pm. All visitors must stay in the room (or bed space in shared rooms) allocated to the person they are visiting.
- A support person may be able to stay overnight by negotiation with the midwife in charge and if a single room can be allocated. These are limited rooms and the Clinical Charge Midwife has the discretion of placement into a single room. Overnight support people will be required to sign an agreement outlining the expectations of their stay. If an overnight stay is not possible the support person may stay from 7am to 8pm.
- Request for discretionary consideration for changes to the above on compassionate grounds should be discussed with the midwife in charge.
- Ideally we would like children to stay home but please discuss with the midwife in charge if children need to attend for short visits or on compassionate grounds to enable partners to be in attendance during the day.

5. Emergency department

- Patients may be allowed one support person in the department.

6. Clinical Decision Unit

- Patients may be allowed one support person in CDU.

7. Starship Hospital

To help protect patients, whānau and staff, we are restricting the number of tamariki and whānau visiting Starship as below:

- Parents or caregivers only to visit.
- Only one parent or caregiver can be present at a time, except during a handover period where two parents may be present for no more than two hours.
- No tamariki, including brothers and sisters under 14 years are allowed to visit except for compassionate exceptions.

Resources to support

- [Visitor information sheet](#) – after screening
- [Screening questions](#)
- [Script for visitor screeners](#)
- [Escalation pathway for screeners](#)
- [Visitor policy poster](#)

This guidance has been written with advice taken by:

- Ministry of Health COVID-19 Hospital & Clinic Patient Visiting Policy
- Health & Safety Representatives from Te Toka Tumai