

Purpose:	<p>Steps have been taken to limit the number of people entering acute care facilities in order to protect patients*, health-care staff, and the public from COVID-19. In recognition of the added layer of protection provided by the COVID-19 vaccines and given the vulnerability of patients in acute care even when fully vaccinated themselves, individuals visiting acute care facilities must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Proof of vaccination (e.g., BC Vaccine Card or equivalent) and photo ID is required at the time of entry into the facility.</p> <p>Island Health recognizes that family members* are key partners in care and play an important role in well-being, comfort, quality of life, healing and/ or recovery. Health-care teams will ensure they are supporting safe visits between patients, clients and their families as much as possible.</p>
Scope:	<p>This guideline applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients (*patients / clients) • Family members /support people (*visitors) • Health care staff, contractors, volunteers

1.0 Acute Care Visitor Guidelines

- Under the current Ministry of Health [Overview of Visits in Acute Care](#), patients are permitted up to two **fully vaccinated** visitors at a time based on the physical space of the care setting. The coordination of visits may look different based on each unique care environment and/or program.
 - Emergency rooms and intensive care units may be limited to one visitor at a time.
 - More than two visitors may be allowed at one time for palliative, hospice and end-of-life care.
 - See program specific guidelines for additional considerations if applicable (i.e.: pediatric care, labour and delivery).
- All visitors will complete the Covid- 19 [health screening process](#) for acute care facilities prior to entry. This process includes providing proof of full vaccination. Visitors who do not demonstrate that they are fully vaccinated will not be able to enter a facility, including passing through the facility to access an outdoor space.
- Exceptions to visitor vaccination requirements include individuals with an [approved medical exemption](#), children under the age of 12 years and visits that meet specific care setting criteria:
 - Visits for compassionate care, including critical illness, palliative, hospice, and end-of-life care, and medical assistance in dying;
 - Visits to the emergency department or to the intensive care unit
 - Visits for pediatric care, labour and delivery
 - Additional exceptions may include:
 - Visits to support physical care (i.e.:assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care);
 - Visits to support communication, translation or decision-making;
 - Visits for mental well-being, emotional, spiritual or cultural support; or
 - Visits to assist children/minors, frail individuals and/or people with a disability.

- Palliative, hospice and end-of-life care settings are exempt from visitor vaccination requirements (see [Palliative and End of Life Care: Essential Visits Across ALL Care Settings](#) for more information).
- Patients with COVID-19 can have visits with a safety plan in place.
- International family members are permitted to visit. See the [COVID-19 International Visitor Tipsheet and Safety Plan](#) for additional guidance.

2.0 Communication

- Communication with patients and visitors in the practice environment will be grounded in cultural safety, trauma informed care and free from racism.
- In times of uncertainty, staff will seek guidance from their leader before making any visit decisions.
- Patients or visitors are encouraged to speak to a unit/program/site leader at the time of a concern about visits. If their needs are not met, they may reach out to the [Patient Care Quality Office](#).

3.0 Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Directives:

- All visitors must wear a medical-grade mask in clinical and non-clinical areas of a facility, clean their hands before and after visiting (using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and respect personal space of other patients, visitors and health care staff.
- For staff PPE guidelines see [PPE During COVID-19 Pandemic](#), the [Mask Policy](#) and [Mask Use in Health Care Facilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) .