

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.</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 / residents) • Family members* (support people / visitors) • Health care staff, contractors, volunteers

1.0 General Visitor Guidelines

- Under the current Ministry of Health [Overview of Visits in Acute Care](#), all patients in **acute care facilities** may have **two visitors at a time** as space allows (and do not require the same two visitors for each visit). Exceptions for specific care settings are listed below:
 - **More than two visitors** may be allowed at one time for **pediatric care, labour and delivery** (see unit-specific guidelines), **and palliative and end-of-life care** (see [Palliative and End of Life Care: Essential Visits Across ALL Care Settings](#)) based on physical space of care settings.
 - **Emergency rooms and intensive care units** may be limited to **one visitor at a time**.
 - **Clinical decision-making** will continue to guide **unique circumstances**.
- The coordination of visits may look different based on specific care environments (see [Safe Co-ordination of Visits in Multi-Bed Rooms](#)). Visits ARE NOT removed if a patient's health status changes or if they are transferred to another care setting.
- Visitors for Alternative Level of Care (ALC) patients are encouraged and outings may be considered in consultation with the care team.
- Patients with COVID-19 can have visits with a safety plan in place. Contact ethicsmatters@viha.ca for support if required.
- 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.
- Visitor posters are available for posting at entrances and on floors/units: [Visitor Restrictions](#)
- Patients or visitors are encouraged to speak to a unit/program 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:

- Regardless of immunization status, all visitors are required to wear a medical-grade mask in all 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.
- For staff PPE guidelines see [PPE During COVID-19 Pandemic](#) and the [Mask Policy](#).