

Western Health Visitation QRG

Updated 19 January 2021



Western Health

COVID - 19

Be Safe -- Be Smart -- Be Kind

Western Health has implemented visitor restrictions to keep the community safe while supporting the provision of the highest level of care during the COVID-19 pandemic. These restrictions are consistent with Department of Health and Human Services guidance and Hospital Visitor Directions issued by the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

For the purposes of this QRG, visitors and support persons are referred to as 'visitors'.

Who should read this?

This QRG is for Western Health staff.

What is this QRG about?

This QRG outlines Western Health's visitation guidelines and where exceptions to these guidelines may apply.

Who can visit a patient at Western Health?

Due to physical distancing requirements, visitor restrictions remain in place at Western Health.

Patients on **designated COVID wards** and patients with **confirmed COVID-19** or **suspected COVID-19** are **only permitted visitors if an exemption is granted**. Refer to the "Exemptions to Visitation Guideline" section below for details.

Further exceptions to these guidelines may be granted provided physical distancing can be maintained. Refer to the "Exemptions to Visitation Guideline" section below for details.

Guidelines for entry to all Western Health sites (except Joan Kirner Women's and Children's)

Patient / Area	Visitation Guidance	Time Restrictions
Ward Patients (except JKWC)	Two people per patient per day	Unlimited Between 12pm and 8pm
ED patient < 18 years	Two parents or guardians or temporary carers per patient	None
ED patient > 18 years	One support person per patient	None

Outpatients, Pathology and Medical Imaging	One person per patient only where physical distancing permits	None
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Medical Imaging patients are advised to attend their appointment alone due to limited space in waiting rooms. Exemptions can be granted as outlined below.

Where physical distancing is not possible, exemptions may be made if the patient is < 18 years or the patient is > 18 years and requires support.

Procedures	One person who is picking up a patient following a procedure.	Pick-up and Drop-off only
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Visitors should not wait within WH premises during the procedure.

Key considerations:

- The ability to **maintain physical distancing guidance** is a priority (maintain 1.5m and adhere to room density quotient of 1 person per 4m²). To ensure physical distancing is maintained it is recommend that visiting times are co-ordinated. Each ward may choose how to operationalise this to meet their needs.
- Families, friends, carers should be encouraged to co-ordinate their visits to avoid a situation where the visitor limit is exceeded. If this occurs they may be unable to see their family member or friend in the health service.
- Visitors presenting with a COVID-19 diagnosis or symptoms of COVID-19 are not permitted to visit (see 'What Visitor Screening is required?' section below).
- Visitors who are under investigation for COVID-19, who are a close contact of a person confirmed to have COVID-19, or who may be part of a suspected cluster or outbreak are not permitted to visit (see 'What Visitor Screening is required?' section below).

Guidelines for entry to Joan Kirner Women's and Children's

In addition to the visitation guidance outlined below, children may only attend appointments or visit in clinic areas when an exemption has been pre-arranged.

Level	Visitation Guidance	Time Restrictions
Ground Floor Paediatric Clinic	One parent or carer/support person	None
Level 1 Women's Clinic	Women to attend appointment alone	N/A

Level 2 Operating Theatre	One support person per woman or child admitted for surgery	None
Level 3 Maternity Assessment Centre (MAC)	MAC 1 – One support person per woman admitted for pregnancy assessment or induction of labour MAC 2 - Women to attend planned appointments alone	None N/A
Level 3 Birthing	One support person per woman	None
Level 5 Newborn Services	Two people per baby/multiple births per day	Unlimited
Level 6 Children's Ward	Two people per child per day	Unlimited
Level 7 Women's Ward	Two people per woman per day <i>*** One support person per woman is permitted for an unlimited time between 8am and 8pm</i>	Unlimited Between 12pm and 8pm
Level 8 Women's Ward	Two people per woman per day <i>*** One support person per woman is permitted for an unlimited time between 8am and 8pm</i>	Unlimited Between 12pm and 8pm

What Visitor Screening is required?

Western Health has prepared single entrances for visitors to enter the hospital. On entry, visitors will be screened for COVID-19 and their details will be entered into a visitor register. Each visitor will be provided with a colour coded wrist band (where colour denotes the day of the week) indicating they have been screened and registered.

Visitors must NOT visit the health service if they:

- Have tested positive for COVID-19 OR are awaiting test results, and have not met the criteria for discharge from isolation; or
- Have returned to Australia from overseas in the past 14 days, unless they have been granted an exemption by DHHS COVID-19 Quarantine; or
- Have been contacted by the DHHS or anyone else within the past 14 days, to let them know that they may have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 or that they may be part of a suspected cluster or outbreak of COVID-19
- Have a temperature higher than 37.5 degrees
- Have symptoms of acute respiratory infection such as:
 - fever or chills
 - breathing difficulties such as breathlessness
 - cough

- sore throat
- runny nose
- loss of sense of smell or taste

Can exemptions be made to visitation guidelines?

Exemptions to visitor restrictions may be applied such as for compassionate reasons and end of life care. The types of exemptions that may be granted and processes for granting an exemption are outlined in Appendix 1.

What are visitors required to do when visiting Western Health?

- Visitor name, contact details, time of arrival and the patient they are visiting will be recorded by Security upon entry
- Visitors must stay in the patient's room at all times and limit movement around the building. Quick trips may be made to the bathroom or to purchase food or drinks. Visitors should minimise the consumption of food/drinks during their visit
- Visitors over 12 years will be provided with a single use mask when entering the hospital if they do not have their own surgical mask. For those who cannot wear a mask, a face shield will be provided. Visitors should wear the mask or shield throughout the visit until they exit the hospital.
 - In accordance with DHHS guidance, if an individual has a valid reason (such as a medical condition or trauma) for being unable to wear a face mask or shield, an exemption may be granted. No supporting evidence is required. Security staff should refer people who request an exemption to wearing a face mask or shield to clinical screening staff or directly to the Nurse in Charge of the ward/outpatient service they are attending. The Nurse in Charge is responsible for ensuring it is safe for the visitor/patient to enter and that relevant staff are informed of their arrival. Consideration should be given to the ability to maintain physical distance, exposure to COVID positive or suspected COVID patients and OHS.
- Visitors must maintain social distancing requirements. There should be no physical contact, keeping a distance of at least 1.5 meters or two arm's length between themselves and the patient, as well as staff
- Visitors should limit the number of personal items that they bring into the hospital. This will reduce the number of unwanted germs they bring into the hospital and take home with them
- When the visit is over, visitors should leave the hospital and avoid spending time in public areas, including waiting areas, cafeterias and vending areas. Single use masks should be discarded upon leaving the hospital in the bins provided
- Visitors should wash their hands with soap or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser after using the lifts, holding railings and every time they enter or exit a patient room
- Visitors should use a tissue and cover their mouth when they cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze in to their elbow
- The COVID Visitor Checklist (available on the microsite) should be completed by nursing staff for visitors to COVID wards and for visitors to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 admitted throughout the health service.

How can other family and friends stay in touch with their loved one?

During this period of COVID-19 restrictions it is recommended, wherever possible, that patients are supported to connect with loved ones through audio and video talking and texting. The patient may use their personal phone, computer or tablet to stay connected with their family and friends.

How will we support patients who are non-English speaking?

Interpreting services are available for all patients at Western Health. Further information can be found in the Interpreter - Provision of Language Services QRG on the COVID-19 Microsite.

Do these restrictions apply to hospital workers?

Hospital workers are permitted to remain in hospitals for the purposes of their work. Hospital workers include:

- An employee or contractor of the hospital
- A student of the hospital under the supervision of an employee or contractor of the hospital
- A volunteer with specific health service approval to provide goods or services to a patient in hospital
- A person who provides health, medical or pharmaceutical goods or services to a patient of the hospital, whether on a paid or voluntary basis
- A person who is a disability worker who provides a disability service to a patient with a disability
- A person who provides goods or services to keep the hospital in operation, whether on a paid or voluntary basis. This includes union and employer representatives
- A person required for emergency management or law enforcement in the hospital

References

Department of Health and Human Services. (2020) *Factsheet for visitors to hospital Coronavirus (COVID-19) update 9 June 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

Department of Health and Human Services. (2020) *Visiting hospitals in Victoria. Updated 27 September 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/visiting-hospitals-covid-19>

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic). (2020) *Hospital Visitor Directions (No 15) Updated 22 November 2020*.

Victoria Government. (2020) *Face masks – when to wear a face mask*. Retrieved 2 December 2020 from: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/face-masks-when-wear-face-mask#exceptions-for-not-wearing-a-face-mask>



Appendix 1: Exemptions to visitation guidelines

Decisions regarding visitor exemptions should be made on a case by case basis by the Nurse Unit Manager or Nurse-In-Charge (within hours) and Associate Unit Manager or In-Charge (out of hours). As required, requests may be escalated to the Operations Manager (within hours) or After Hours Access Manager (out of hours). If an exemption is requested that does not comply with this guidance, this should also be escalated to the Infectious Disease team.

Staff granting exemptions are required to provide security with an updated list each morning. Security will print this list for staff manning the relevant entry point. The staff manning the entry point will contact the relevant ward to advise them of the visitor's arrival.

When a visitor exemption is in place and the patient transfers between wards, the decision for the exemption and agreed arrangement with the family should be communicated as part of the handover process.

What types of exemptions can be granted?

Visitors in the following categories may be granted entry to Western Health. Please note this is not an exhaustive list:

- [Visitors with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in exceptional circumstances \(including close contacts and returned travellers\)](#)
- [Visitors who are symptomatic \(or awaiting test results\) in exceptional circumstances](#)
- [Visitors of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in exceptional circumstances](#)
- Visitors in addition to those outlined under "Who can visit a patient at Western Health?" (*an exemption is required to ensure physical distancing is maintained*):
 - [Additional visitors to patients receiving end of life care or whose medical condition is life threatening](#)
 - Additional number of visitors provided physical distancing guidelines can be maintained
 - Visitation outside of prescribed visiting hours provided physical distancing guidelines can be maintained
 - One person whose purpose is to provide essential care and support for the patient's physical, emotional, cultural, spiritual or social wellbeing (including mental health) that optimises the care delivered by the health care team
 - One person whose purpose is to provide interpreter or informal language support to enable the delivery of care
 - One person whose purpose is learning to support a patient's care upon the patient's discharge

See below for further detail on these exemptions.

Exemption: Visitors with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 (including close contacts and returned travellers)

Only in exceptional circumstances, such as end of life care, can a person visit a hospital if they are a known contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19, or a returned overseas traveller in mandatory quarantine, or have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Details of how to set up a visit from a close contact or positive visitor can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

- Confirmed COVID-19 positive visitors or symptomatic close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 can only be granted approval to visit a patient via the Chief Health Officer/Deputy Chief Health Officer due to the risk involved
- To obtain an exemption:
 - Call **1800 675 398**
 - Select Option 2: 'Information about physical distancing for business or individuals or the Department door knocking service'
 - Select Option 2: 'Individual or household information about physical distancing or the Department door knocking service'
 - Request to speak with someone regarding an exemption from the Chief Health Officer/Deputy Chief Health Officer for COVID positive or High Risk (likely) COVID Positive Visitors in hospital.
- Visitation exemptions for known contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 who are **asymptomatic** can be granted by ward management.

Exemption: Visitors who are symptomatic (or awaiting test results)

Only in exceptional circumstances, such as end of life care or as the parent of a child, can a person visit a hospital if they are presenting with COVID-19 symptoms or awaiting results of a COVID-19 test.

- Exemptions for a visitor who has undergone a COVID-19 test due to symptoms and a **negative result** has been obtained can be granted by ward management
- Exemptions for a visitor who is presenting with COVID-19 symptoms and who has undergone a COVID-19 test (low-risk suspected case) and is awaiting results or who has not undergone a test should be escalated to the Chief Health Officer/Deputy Chief Health Officer via the process described above.
- If a parent of an admitted child is symptomatic, it is preferable for another parent or carer who is well to remain with the child whilst in hospital. If no other parent or carer is available, the symptomatic parent may be granted an exemption to remain and care for their child.

Exemption: Visitors of Patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

Exemptions for visitation to any COVID-19 confirmed or suspected patient can be granted by ward management or the treating team where the visitor is asymptomatic and not a close contact or confirmed COVID-19 case. Details of how to safely set up a visit with a patient who is suspected or confirmed with COVID-19 can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

Visitation to a COVID-19 confirmed or suspected deceased patient can only occur if a visit was unable to be facilitated prior to death. Please refer to the Care of the Deceased Patient QRG on the microsite for further details.

Exemption: Additional visitors to patients receiving end of life care or whose medical condition is life threatening

Where resources permit (including space, staffing and PPE) Western Health will support compassionate visiting arrangements for patients receiving end of life care in hospital or whose medical condition is life threatening. Visitors to patients who are receiving end of life care or whose medical condition is life threatening may have additional exemptions granted including:

- The number of visitors in the patient's room at any one time should not exceed **two adults and dependents**
- The total number of visitors throughout the day may exceed two adults and dependents. If there are many visitors, consider implementing a timetable to allocate visitation time slots ([Appendix 2](#))

Further information

Guidance for healthcare professionals in their understanding of COVID-19 context palliative care in the following link <http://www.anzspm.org.au/c/anzspm?a=da&did=1005077&pid=1587788101>

Recommendations on facilitating visits for patients receiving palliative care is relevant across contexts and can be used as a guide <https://www.acccn.com.au/documents/item/938>.

Visitation Exemption Approval Summary Table

Type of Exemption	Approval Process	Criteria
Visitor is asymptomatic and not COVID positive or a close contact	Security and Ward Management	As per Visitation Guidelines and Exemptions Criteria
Visitor is symptomatic and has undergone a COVID-19 test where the result is negative	Security and Ward Management	Only for EOLC, when medical condition is life threatening or as a parent of a child/partner of a birthing woman
Visitor is symptomatic and has not undergone a COVID-19 test or is waiting results of a test	DHHS via the Chief Health Officer/Deputy Chief Health Officer due to the risk involved	Only for EOLC, when medical condition is life threatening or as a parent of a child/partner of a birthing woman
Visitor is close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case and is asymptomatic	Ward Management	Only for EOLC, when medical condition is life threatening or as a parent of a child/partner of a birthing woman
Visitor is confirmed COVID-19 case	DHHS via the Chief Health Officer/Deputy Chief Health Officer due to the risk involved	Only for EOLC, when medical condition is life threatening or as a parent of a child/partner of a birthing woman

Visitor is a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case and is symptomatic	DHHS via the Chief Health Officer/Deputy Chief Health Officer due to the risk involved	Only for EOLC, when medical condition is life threatening or as a parent of a child/partner of a birthing woman
Deceased suspected or positive COVID-19 patient where the visitor is not COVID-19 positive or a close contact	Ward Management	Only in exceptional circumstances where a visit was unable to occur prior to death

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Appendix 2: Timetable to allocate visitation time slots

Time	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
06:00							
07:00							
08:00							
09:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
13:00							
14:00							
15:00							
16:00							
17:00							
18:00							
19:00							
20:00							
21:00							
22:00							
23:00							
00:00							

Appendix 3: Visitation in the context of suspected or confirmed COVID

Visitation is not permitted to patients who are suspected/ confirmed with COVID-19 OR for visitors with suspected/ confirmed COVID-19. In exceptional circumstances an exemption may be granted using the processes outlined in Appendix 1. Visits in the context of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 must be prearranged (date and time) and are limited to a duration of **60 minutes**.

If an exemption is granted how can the visit proceed?

For visitors to a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

If a visitation exemption is granted, the Nurse-In-Charge or the Nurse Unit Manager (within hours) or Nurse In-Charge (out of hours) must:

- Check if the visitor is in the at-risk group and whether they may wish to reconsider whether it is safe to visit someone suspected or confirmed with COVID-19. This includes,
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
 - people 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions
 - people 70 years and older
 - people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems
 - people in aged care facilities
 - people with a disability
- Arrange a date & time for the visit to occur. The duration of the visit must not exceed **60 minutes**
 - On the morning of the visit, notify security of the visitation exemption granted. Security will communicate this to entry point staff. Visitors will then present to the main entry point and undergo usual processes including COVID-19 screening, mask provision, visitor registration and confirmation the visitor has a visitation exemption granted
- Where children are visiting a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, if PPE cannot be effectively worn, consider limiting to video or online visits
- Educate the visitor regarding how to keep safe during the visit (as outlined within the section of this guideline 'What are visitors required to do when visiting Western Health?')
- Upon arrival to the ward, complete the COVID Visitor Checklist (available in the microsite). This includes ensuring the visitor is provided with, and supported to safely don and doff, personal protective equipment (PPE) which abides by Western Health PPE guidance available on the microsite and educated in safe usage.
- At the end of the visit,
 - Complete the COVID Visitor Checklist (available on the microsite)
 - Provide the visitor with the "Advice following your visit to a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID" information sheet (available on the microsite)

For visitors presenting with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

If a visitation exemption is granted by the management of the ward (for asymptomatic close contacts) or by the Chief Health Officer/ Deputy Chief Health Officer (symptomatic close contacts or confirmed COVID-19), the Nurse In-Charge or the Nurse Unit Manager (in hours) or Nurse In-Charge (out of hours) must:

- Check if the patient has consented to the proposed visit
- Check if the patient is in the at-risk group and whether they may wish to reconsider whether it is safe to be visited by someone suspected or confirmed with COVID-19. This includes,
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
 - people 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions
 - people 70 years and older
 - people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems
 - people in aged care facilities
 - people with a disability
- Arrange a specific appointment time for the visitor to visit the patient. The appointment time shall be at a time which suits both the ward/ service, patient and the visitor. The duration of the visit must not exceed **60 minutes**
- Prior to the visit remind the visitor to wear a surgical mask from home to the hospital
- Advise the visitor not to use public transport or taxis. They must drive themselves or be driven by a family member
- On the morning of the visit, notify security of the planned visit. Security will then communicate this to entry point staff
- Inform the visitor to present to a main entry point. Entry point staff will then facilitate hand hygiene, provide the visitor with a surgical mask and face shield and contact the ward/ service to collect the visitor. The visitor will be instructed to wait where they are physically distanced (minimum 1.5 metres) from others and to avoid using public facilities during their visit
- Meet the visitor at the main entry point and escort them to the ward
- Provide the visitor with, and support them to complete hand hygiene and to safely don and doff, personal protective equipment (PPE) which abides by Western Health PPE guidance available on the microsite
- Educate the visitor regarding how to keep safe during the visit (as outlined within the section of this guideline 'What are visitors required to do when visiting Western Health?')
- At the end of the visit,
 - Support the visitor to wash their hands with soap and water
 - Advise the visitor to wash their clothing in hot water (60–90 degrees Celsius) and laundry detergent. If machine washing is not possible, soak the clothing in hot water and detergent in a large bucket or trough. Avoid splashing by wearing rubber gloves and using a stick to stir
 - Advise the visitor to dry their clothes in a clothes dryer or hang them out to dry in full sunlight
- Escort the visitor to exit the hospital.

Appendix 4: Definitions

What is defined as 'End of Life' for the purpose of visitation?

End of life means a situation where the person's death is expected within days, or where the patient is at risk of dying of a sudden acute event.

Who is defined as 'Parent', 'Carer' or 'Guardian' for the purpose of visitation?

Parent, carer or guardian in relation to a patient aged under 18 means an adult in a significant primary caring role, including biological, adoptive, or foster parents, kinship carers, step parents and legal guardians