



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 guidance and Hospital Visitor Directions issued by the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

Visitors play an important role in the health and wellbeing of patients receiving care at Western Health. These guidelines have been developed to assist areas across Western Health to facilitate visitation safely. 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.

## 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. For further information please refer to the 'Visitation Screening' QRG on the [Coronavirus Microsite](#).

## Who can visit a patient at Western Health?

Aligning with the Department of Health COVID Peak guidance, visitors are restricted from Western Health sites, unless permitted by exemption. There are two categories of exemptions, 'general' exemptions and 'special' exemptions. **General exemptions** should be granted by ward management for the reasons as detailed in the tables below. 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.

NO visitors aged under 16 years are permitted, unless they are the parents of a hospitalised child/ baby or for visitation in the context of critical/ end of life care.

Reason	Duration
<b>Paediatric Patients</b> Parents/guardians of a child who is a patient in hospital	2 parents/guardians allowed, for an unlimited time
<b>Emotional or social support</b> To provide emotional or social support to a patient if this cannot be done electronically this also includes: -people with mental health conditions or dementia -to provide language support	1 person, for up to 2 hours
<b>Critical and end of life care</b> To visit a patient whose medical condition is life threatening, is dying and/or receiving end of life care	2 people at a time, for an unlimited time* *Appendix 1 may assist with the scheduling of visitors
<b>Maternity</b> A partner or support person for a pregnant woman or patient in birthing or a maternity ward	1 person for a pregnant women or patient in a maternity ward, for up to 2 hours, between 8am to 8pm  2 support people for a patient in birthing for an unlimited time
<b>ED and Outpatients</b> Support for a patient attending an emergency department or outpatient clinic if necessary to support provision of care	1 person, if necessary to support provision of care and space permitting
<b>Discharge</b> The visitor is learning to support the patient's care upon discharge	1 person, for up to 2 hours
<b>Procedures</b>	One person who is picking up a patient following a procedure. Visitors should not wait within WH premises during the procedure.

Please note the number of visitors specified in this table may be exceeded if dependants of a visitor (or patient in hospital) are in the group and care for the dependents cannot be arranged.

#### **Additional guidelines for entry to Joan Kirner Women's and Children's**

Level	Visitation rule
Ground Floor Paediatric Clinic	One parent or carer/support person
Level 1 Women's Clinic	Women to attend appointment alone
Level 2 Operating Theatre	One support person per woman or child admitted for surgery

Level 3 Maternity Assessment Centre (MAC)	One support person per woman admitted for pregnancy assessment or induction of labour Women to attend planned appointments alone
Level 3 Birthing	Two support people per woman per admission to hospital
Level 5 Newborn Services	Two parents, carers or guardians per baby/multiple births
Level 6 Children's Ward	Two parents, carers or guardians per child
Level 7 Women's Ward	One support person per woman <u>per admission</u> , for up to 2 hours, between 8am to 8pm
Level 8 Women's Ward	One support person per woman <u>per admission</u> , for up to 2 hours, between 8am to 8pm

Please note exemption to the 2 hour time period may be given in circumstances where the purpose of the visit cannot be achieved in a 2 hour timeframe.

### Special exemptions to visitation guidelines

**Special exemptions** in the following categories require both Department of Health AND Western Health approval. Exemptions in these contexts are only granted in exceptional circumstances. Refer to the 'Visitation Special Exemptions Approval Process' QRG on the [Coronavirus Site](#) for further details.

- Visitors who have been diagnosed with COVID-19
- Visitors who have arrived in Australia from overseas within the past 14 days
- Visitors who had known close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19
- Visitors with symptoms of COVID-19
- Visitors awaiting COVID-19 test results
- Visitors of a patient suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19

### What are visitors required to do when visiting Western Health?

- 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, unless they have their own surgical mask in situ. 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
- 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

Hospital Visitor Directions (26) Retrieved from: [Department of Health and Human Services Victoria | Victoria's restriction levels \(dhhs.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/visiting-hospitals-covid-19)

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>

DHHS. (2021). *Visiting Hospitals in Victoria*. Retrieved from <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/visiting-hospitals#current-restrictions>



## Appendix 1: 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							
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19:00							
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21:00							
22:00							
23:00							
00:00							

## Appendix 2: 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