

# Western Health Visitation Special Exemptions Approval Process QRG

Updated 31 August 2021



Western Health

COVID - 19

Be Safe -- Be Smart -- Be Kind

## Special exemptions to visitation guidelines approval process

This section outlines 'special exemption' categories. Exemptions in these contexts are only granted in exceptional circumstances and usually require approval from the Western Public Health Unit (WPHU) or Department of Health (DH) AND the Western Health Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent.

Details of how to set up a visit in the context of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 can be found in Appendix 1.

<b>Context</b>	Visitors who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and have not been given, or taken to have been given, clearance from self-isolation under the 'Diagnosed Persons and Close Contacts Directions'
<b>Exemptions granted</b>	Exemptions are only granted in exceptional circumstances, such as if the person is, <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) the <b>parent, carer or guardian</b> of the patient, or has temporary care of the patient, and the purpose of the visit is to breastfeed the patient; or</li><li>(ii) a person whose presence at the hospital is for the purposes of end of life support for a patient of the hospital; or</li><li>(iii) an immediate family member of a patient whose medical condition is life threatening; and</li></ul>
<b>Conditions of exemption</b>	One visitor granted, or two visitors from the same household  Visits are limited to a duration of 60 minutes
<b>Exemptions granted by</b>	In order to visit someone in hospital, visitors diagnosed with COVID-19 must receive an exemption to hospital visitation rules granted by both the Chief Health Officer or Deputy Chief Health Officer <b>AND</b> the Western Health Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent.

### Western Health approval process

Western Health will determine whether it will allow a visitor diagnosed with COVID-19 to visit, and what conditions it will impose on such visits.

Approver: Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent

<b>Context</b>	During the 14 days immediately preceding the entry, the person arrived in Australia from a place outside Australia other than a person arriving on a quarantine-free flight from an overseas location designated by the Australian Government as a green travel zone
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<b>Exemptions granted</b>	<p>Exemptions are only granted in exceptional circumstances, such as if the person is,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the parent, carer or guardian of the patient, or has temporary care of the patient; or</li> <li>(ii) the partner or support person of a pregnant patient of the hospital, and the purpose of the visit is to attend the birth of the patient's child; or</li> <li>(iii) a person whose presence at the hospital is for the purposes of end of life support for a patient of the hospital; or</li> <li>(iv) an immediate family member of a patient whose medical condition is life threatening.</li> </ul>
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<b>Conditions of exemption</b>	<p>One visitor granted at a time, or two visitors from the same household</p> <p>Visits are limited to a duration of 60 minutes</p>
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<b>Exemptions granted by</b>	<p>In order to visit someone in hospital, residents in mandatory quarantine must receive an exemption to hospital visitation rules granted by both COVID Quarantine Victoria (CQV) <b>AND</b> the Western Health Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent.</p>
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#### **CQV approval process**

The resident in mandatory quarantine must request temporary leave via the CQV Authorised Officer (AO). Temporary leave requests can be made via phone or email. The AO will consider the request. The AO will then contact Western Health to confirm Western Health is willing to accept the resident. Once approved, the AO arranges the temporary leave with staff and transport at the hotel.

#### **Western Health approval process**

Western Health will determine whether it will allow a resident from mandatory quarantine to visit, and what conditions it will impose on such visits. If Western Health approves the visit, a letter of approval must be provided to CQV outlining any special conditions. Letters of approval shall be sought from:

Approver: Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases

*Note:* If a resident contacts Western Health directly, the resident should be advised to contact the AO who will assist them to make an application for temporary leave.

*Note:* If a person intending to visit is still overseas, a letter of support may be provided to them by the Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent.

<b>Context</b>	During the 14 days immediately preceding the entry, the person had known contact with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19
<b>Exemptions granted</b>	Exemptions are only granted in exceptional circumstances, such as if the person is, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the parent, carer or guardian of the patient, or has temporary care of the patient; or</li> <li>(ii) the partner or support person of a pregnant patient of the hospital, and the purpose of the visit is to attend the birth of the patient's child; or</li> <li>(iii) a person whose presence at the hospital is for the purposes of end of life support for a patient of the hospital; or</li> <li>(iv) an immediate family member of a patient whose medical condition is life threatening.</li> </ul>
<b>Conditions of exemption</b>	One visitor granted, or two visitors from the same household Visits are limited to a duration of 60 minutes
<b>Exemptions granted by</b>	In order to visit someone in hospital, visitors who are confirmed close contacts must receive an exemption to hospital visitation rules granted by both the Chief Health Officer or Deputy Chief Health Officer <b>AND</b> the Western Health Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent.  <b>Western Health approval process</b>  Western Health will determine whether it will allow a confirmed close contact to visit, and what conditions it will impose on such visits.  Approver: Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent
<b>Context</b>	Visitors who have a temperature higher than 37.5 degrees or symptoms of acute respiratory infection OR those who have been testing for COVID-19 and have not yet received the results of that test
<b>Exemptions granted</b>	Exemptions are only granted in exceptional circumstances, such as if the person is, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the parent, carer or guardian of the patient, or has temporary care of the patient; or</li> <li>(ii) the partner or support person of a pregnant patient of the hospital, and the purpose of the visit is to attend the birth of the patient's child; or</li> <li>(iii) a person whose presence at the hospital is for the purposes of end of life support for a patient of the hospital; or</li> </ul>

	(iv) an immediate family member of a patient whose medical condition is life threatening; and
<b>Conditions of exemption</b>	<p>One visitor granted, or two visitors from the same household</p> <p>Visits are limited to a duration of 60 minutes</p> <p><i>Note:</i> 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.</p>
<b>Exemptions granted by</b>	<p>In order to visit someone in hospital, visitors suspected to have COVID-19 must receive an exemption to hospital visitation rules granted by both the Chief Health Officer or Deputy Chief Health Officer <b>AND</b> the Western Health Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent.</p> <p><b>Western Health approval process</b></p> <p>Western Health will determine whether it will allow a visitor suspected to have COVID-19 to visit, and what conditions it will impose on such visits.</p> <p>Approver: Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent</p>
<b>Context</b>	Visitors of patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19
<b>Exemptions granted</b>	Exemptions only granted in exceptional circumstances, such as end of life care
<b>Conditions of exemption</b>	<p>One visitor granted, or two visitors from the same household</p> <p>Visits are limited to a duration of 60 minutes</p> <p><i>Note:</i> 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.</p>
<b>Exemptions granted by</b>	<p>In hours: Nurse Unit Manager or Nurse-In-Charge. Escalation to the Operations Manager if required.</p> <p>Out of hours: Associate Unit Manager or In-Charge. Escalation to the After Hours Access Manager if required.</p>
<b>Context</b>	Ambulatory SCOVID patients including paediatric Joan Kirner Women's and Children's
<b>Exemptions granted</b>	Exemptions only granted for patients who <i>must</i> attend a face to face appointment

<b>Conditions of exemption</b>	<p>Where the patient is an adult, the patient attends the appointment alone</p> <p>Where the patient is a child, one parent is permitted to accompany</p>
<b>Exemptions granted by</b>	<p>Approver: Head of Unit – Infectious Diseases or equivalent in conjunction with relevant Operations Manager</p>
<b>Procedure</b>	<p><b>Follow procedure as outlined in Appendix 1 including:</b></p> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Prior to the appointment communicate the process to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient/ family</li> <li>• Head of Unit</li> <li>• Clinic Staff</li> <li>• Operations Manager</li> <li>• Infection Prevention</li> </ul> <p><b>Appointment</b></p> <p>When booking the patient ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The patient is booked into the last available appointment</li> <li>• A dedicated room is booked</li> <li>• Air purifiers are requested via Infection Prevention if available</li> <li>• The room contains only necessary equipment and supplies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Patient arrival</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security or patient to call designated number prior to arrival</li> <li>• Nursing staff should escort patient in Tier 3 PPE according to WH PPE guidelines directly from car or entrance to isolation room</li> <li>• If the patient is a child, with parent/ guardian consent, determine if they are able to wear a surgical mask, or drape a surgical mask across the neonates face</li> <li>• Patient or parent to complete QR check in located in dedicated room</li> <li>• Nurse to complete the COVID visitor checklist.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consultation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treating clinician in Tier 3 PPE according to WH PPE guidelines and to wait in the room ready for patient's arrival.</li> </ul> <p><b>Completion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient or child to be escorted from building at end of appointment by nominated nursing staff member in full PPE.</li> </ul> <p><b>Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Room should be cleaned as per policy - liaise with Environmental Services prior to appointment to ensure this is done immediately afterwards.</li> </ul>

## References

Department of Health. (2021). *Hospital Visitor Directions*. Retrieved from <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/hospital-visitor-directions-no-22-15-march-2021-covid-19-pdf>

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## Appendix 1: Visitation in the context of suspected or confirmed COVID-19

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 above. 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**. This section outlines if an exemption is granted, how a visit can 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 Visitation Factsheet QRG')
- Upon arrival to the ward, complete the COVID Visitor Checklist (available on the [Coronavirus Site](#)). 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 [Coronavirus Site](#))
  - Provide the visitor with the "Advice following your visit to a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID" information sheet (available on the [Coronavirus Site](#))

## For visitors presenting with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

If a visitation exemption is granted, 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, ride shares 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.