

# Visitation Special Exemptions Approval Process QRG

Updated 29 January 2023



Western Health

COVID - 19

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## Special exemptions to visitation guidelines approval process

This guideline outlines 'special exemption' categories. Exemptions in these contexts are only granted in exceptional circumstances and require approval from the Western Health Senior Leadership.

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>	If any of the three situations below apply: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Visitors who have tested positive to COVID-19 in the last 7 days.</li><li>2. Visitors who have had contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case in the past 7 days and not returned a negative COVID-19 test.</li><li>3. Visitors who have tested RAT positive on day 7 to 10 of their COVID diagnosis</li><li>4. Visitors who have a temperature higher than 37.5 degrees or symptoms of acute respiratory infection.</li></ol>
<b>Exemptions granted</b>	Exemptions are only granted in the following exceptional circumstances, where the person is: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) a person whose presence at the hospital is for the purposes of providing end of life support for a patient of the hospital; or</li><li>(ii) the parent, carer or guardian of the patient; or</li><li>(iii) the partner or support person of a pregnant patient of the hospital; or</li><li>(iv) an immediate family member of a patient whose medical condition is life threatening; or</li><li>(v) a person providing professional care</li><li>(vi) a carer or nominated person where rapid antigen testing prior to entry is not practical; or</li><li>(vii) a person who has a negative PCR result 24 hours prior to entry to the hospital</li></ol>

<b>Conditions of exemption</b>	<p>No more than one visitor of a patient is granted at any one time. Visits are limited to a duration of 60 minutes, except when providing support for birthing women.</p> <p>Visitors must wear an N95 mask for the duration of the visit and must not visit other areas of the hospital or remain on site other than for the purpose of their visit.</p> <p>Refer to Appendix 1 for additional requirements related to the visit.</p>
<b>Exemptions granted by</b>	<p>The visitors referred to above must receive authorisation from the relevant Western Health Director of Nursing &amp; Midwifery/ Director on call.</p> <p>Approval process:</p> <p>Unit manager/nurse or midwife in-charge, in collaboration with the treating medical team, should assess whether the exemption criteria are met and if the visit can be safely facilitated by the team from a resource/PPE perspective.</p> <p>Unit Manager/nurse or midwife in charge then obtains Western Health approval for visit by contacting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In hours – Director of Nursing &amp; Midwifery aligned with Division</li> <li>- After hours – Director on call</li> </ul>

## References

Victorian Government (2022) Guidance – visitors to hospitals. COVID-19 update – 23 April 2022

Department of Health. (2022) *Guidance for the Pandemic (Visitors to Hospitals and Care Facilities) Order (No. 3)*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/pandemic-order-register>

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

If a visitor is a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case, they must seek an exemption, which must be granted before a visit can be arranged. Visits are limited to a duration of 60 minutes, unless the visit is to provide support at a birth.

The Nurse/Midwife In-Charge or the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager (in 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.
- Prior to the visit remind the visitor to wear a mask from home to the hospital.
- Advise the visitor not to use public transport, ride shares or taxis. They should 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 an N95 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 [Visitation QRG](#))
- At the end of the visit,
  - Support the visitor to wash their hands with soap and water
- Escort the visitor to exit the hospital.