



Guidance About Hospital Visitation During Influenza Season



The following information is provided as a guideline to assist local hospitals in the development of their individual visitor policies. The intent is to provide a phased approach to visitor restrictions in order to protect the health of patients, staff, visitors, and families, with the goal of having some degree of consistency among local hospitals. Staff, medical staff, and volunteer screening policies must be outlined by each individual organization and are not addressed in this guideline. Each hospital has the autonomy to adopt these guidelines to the degree that best meets their needs, yet still protects the health of their patients, staff, visitors, and families.

Purpose

To protect the health of patients, staff, visitors, and families through increased infection control measures, restricted access to certain areas of the hospital, and enhanced hospital visitation guidelines.

Visitation Guidelines

Phase 1 – Normal operations, but leaning forward

- Post signage encouraging visitors to self-screen upon entry to the facility.
- Request all visitors and vendors to wash their hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after coughing or sneezing, upon entry/exit to the facility, or being exposed to the respiratory droplets of others (someone else coughed or sneezed).
- Require all individuals entering the hospital with a fever, cough, sore throat, or sneezing to wash their hands or use alcohol based hand sanitizer, report in at a nursing station, and be masked. Masks need to be worn for the duration of the visit at the facility.
- Screen all individuals entering restricted areas (including visitors, vendors, couriers, and families) for flu symptoms prior to entry and exclude if symptomatic. (See screening procedure, page two.) Those areas may include, but are not limited to: NICU, PICU, ICU, Maternal Child Health, Labor and Delivery, Med/Surge, and Oncology Units.
- Exclude children age 12 and under from visiting patients in restricted areas, except for special circumstances (special circumstances to be determined by each organization).
- Limit number of healthy visitors in the emergency department to two at a time (per each patient). Other visitors should remain in the waiting area until it is their turn to visit.
- Limit healthy visitors in a patient room to two, except under special circumstances. Families should be asked to stagger visits to accommodate this guideline and keep number of people in waiting areas to a minimum.

Phase 2 – Moderate impact to operations

Incorporate activities from Phase 1, as well as those listed below.

- Limit access to facility for all visitors, vendors, couriers, and families through a series of access control measures (to be defined by each individual organization).
- Conduct individual screening upon entry to the facility.
- Exclude children age 12 and under from the facility, except for special circumstances. Children must be accompanied by an adult visitor at all times.

Phase 3 – Severe impact to operations

Incorporate activities from Phase 1 and 2, as well as those listed below.

- Screen all vendors prior to entry to the facility.
- Screen all visitors and only allow entry if:
 - They are a designated caregiver or medical power of attorney and/or
 - It is a birth or death circumstance.

SCREENING PROCEDURES

Phase 1

All individuals entering restricted areas of the hospital will be actively screened for signs and symptoms of influenza once per day. This is for the safety of patients, visitors, staff, and families and will help limit the spread of influenza and other communicable respiratory infections.

- Ask all patients, visitors, and vendors if they have had any of the following symptoms in the past 24 hours: **Fever, cough, or sore throat.**
- If **NO** to *all* symptoms, allow individual access to restricted unit/area.
- If **YES** to any of the listed symptoms:
 - Patients – instruct patients with any flu-like symptoms to put on a mask and use hand hygiene. Patient should be taken to an exam/patient room as soon as possible, or directed to a separate waiting area.
 - Visitors/Vendors – Instruct visitors/vendors with flu-like symptoms to put on mask and leave the facility. They should be advised to seek medical care or visit their primary care provider.

Phase 2

All individuals entering the hospital will be actively screened for signs and symptoms of influenza once per day. This is for the safety of patients, visitors, and staff and will help limit the spread of influenza and other communicable respiratory infections.

- Ask all patients, visitors, and vendors if they have had any of the following symptoms in the past 24 hours: **Fever, cough, or sore throat.**
- If **NO** to *all* symptoms, provide individual with a visual indicator (badge/sticker) to show they have been screened today and are symptom-free. Stickers are a common visual cue and indicate the person has been screened and, if chosen by an organization to be used, should follow the following day/color association:
 - Monday – BLUE
 - Tuesday – RED
 - Wednesday – ORANGE
 - Thursday – GREEN
 - Friday - BROWN
 - Saturday – PINK
 - Sunday – BLACK
- If **YES** to any of the above symptoms:
 - Patients – instruct patients with any flu-like symptoms to put on a mask and use hand hygiene. Patient should be taken to an exam/patient room as soon as possible, or directed to a separate waiting area.
 - Visitors/Vendors – Instruct visitors/vendors with flu-like symptoms to put on mask and leave the facility. They should be advised to seek medical care or visit their primary care provider.

Suggested Script for Flu Symptom Screening

Check visually to see if individual is already wearing a badge/sticker. If not, make eye contact and use the following script. (Make appropriate accommodations for non-English speaking patients.)

We are screening for flu symptoms for the ongoing protection of all our patients, visitors, and staff. Have you had any of the following symptoms in the past 24 hours?

- *Fever*
- *Cough*
- *Sore throat*

If patient answers “YES” to any of the above symptoms, ask the patient to mask. Suggested script:
Please put on a mask immediately and keep the mask on the entire time you are at <the facility>. Although you may not have the flu, masking will help limit the spread of the flu or any respiratory infection. We also want to remind you to wash your hands often. Thank you for helping us.

If a visitor or vendor answers “YES” to any of the symptoms listed above, ask them to mask and to leave the facility. Suggested script:
I’m sorry, but to help prevent the spread of the flu or colds, we need you to leave the facility until you are well. (Provide screener with staff exclusion guidelines for reference.) Please put on a mask to wear as you leave.

If a patient, visitor, or vendor answers “NO” to all symptoms, thank them and allow entry to restricted unit/area. If in **Phase 2**, provide them with a visual indicator. Suggested script:
Please wear this badge/sticker while you are at the medical center so others will know we have screened you for flu symptoms. Thank you very much for helping us keep our patients, families, and staff safe.

This Guidance approved by:



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