

Visitor Restrictions

Frequently asked Questions

March 2, 2021

Visitor restrictions are in place to protect patients, visitors, and health care workers by preventing the introduction and spread of COVID-19 at Nova Scotia Health facilities. We understand how difficult these restrictions are for patients and families, and know how important it is to have loved ones present while in hospital. We also know that many patients rely on having a support person with them when they have an appointment or procedure.

For more information, visit the Nova Scotia Health [website](#).

Why are visitor restrictions different in Central Zone?

There are visitor restrictions in place across the entire province. However, with the numbers of COVID-19 going up in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), we are tightening visitor restrictions in Central Zone. Our priority is keeping COVID-19 out of our hospitals, which, as we've seen in other areas of Canada and around the world, can have serious implications to patients and our ability to offer services, such as surgery, medical procedures, and diagnostic tests. We will continue to monitor and make changes in other areas of the province as required.

How many visitors is an inpatient permitted?

Most inpatients can choose two visitors, who will be designated as support people. Additional family members may be permitted for those approaching end-of-life, in discussion with the care team. There may be variations in the number of support people who can visit a patient at the same time and how often these support people can change. Please discuss this with the care team or visit the Nova Scotia Health [website](#) for more details.

Some areas may not be able to accommodate additional support people due to the need to maintain physical distancing. In these cases, our care teams will work with you to discuss options.

If I live in Central Zone can I visit a patient in hospital in another area of the province?

Yes. There are no restrictions on a Central Zone resident being a designated support person for a patient in a facility in another area of the province, assuming all the screening criteria are met.

If I live in New Brunswick or Newfoundland can I visit a patient in hospital in Nova Scotia?

No. There are restrictions on visitors from outside of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, including Newfoundland and New Brunswick. Some exceptions may be made for compassionate reasons.

Please note: Travel for health care is considered essential travel and is permitted. It is important for you to keep your scheduled appointments and seek prompt emergency care when necessary.

I have an appointment/test/procedure at a Central Zone facility? Can I bring a support person with me?

Generally not. Patients coming to hospital for cancer care, emergency, or ambulatory care clinics, appointments or procedure are asked to come alone **unless** they need support to receive care due to physical, intellectual, cognitive, or emotional conditions.

What can I expect when I arrive at a hospital to visit a patient or accompany a patient to an appointment in Central Zone?

When a support person arrives at any Nova Scotia Health facility, they will be asked whether they have COVID symptoms, been at any exposure locations, traveled outside NS or PEI, had contact with anyone who has COVID-19, or are waiting for COVID test results for symptoms or potential exposure. If they answer yes to any of these questions, they will not be able to visit or join their loved one for the appointment. Some exceptions may be made for compassionate reasons.

You can expect to be asked to clean your hands, replace your non-medical mask with a procedure mask, and to follow safe physical distancing.

Who decides who the patient's visitor/support persons will be?

The patient, or patient's substitute decision maker, will identify the designated support person(s).

Are appointments required for visiting a loved one?

Appointments are not required.

Are children permitted to visit a loved one?

The designated support person must be at least 16 years old. Some exceptions may be made for compassionate reasons.

What else do I need to know before visiting?

Visiting support persons will be required to observe physical distancing of at least two metres from staff and other patients, wear a medical mask, practice good hand hygiene, go directly to and from the patient's room or other designated visiting area, and remain in the visiting area for the duration of the visit. Visits to other patients and public areas of the hospital, other than public washrooms, will not be allowed. Visitors are not permitted to use patient washrooms or share devices, books, or food during the visit.

Do these changes apply to Nova Scotia Health long-term care facilities?

These changes do not apply to Nova Scotia Health long-term care facilities. Visitation restrictions in long-term care are mandated under the Health Protection Order.