

Family Presence During COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions

June 28, 2022

Nova Scotia Health is committed to protecting the health and safety of patients and teams, while recognizing the important role that essential care partners (ECPs) play in the physical, mental, and emotional health, healing and/or well-being of patients. While proof of vaccination is no longer required for essential care partners (including primary support persons & family caregivers) **no** general visitation is permitted within Nova Scotia Health facilities.

For the health and safety of our patients and teams, only essential care partners that have been identified by the patient are allowed to visit or accompany a patient in a Nova Scotia Health facility.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely and make changes as the situation allows.

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

Who is an essential care partner (primary support person or family caregiver)?

An essential care partner (ECP) is a support person whose presence is considered essential to the safety and well-being of a patient while they are in the hospital. An ECP is different from a social visitor or a paid support worker. Most often, they are family or close friends of the patient who typically know the patient's health history, lifestyle, and personal values. All patients may choose who are designated to partner in their care and this may include: family, non-family caregivers, support people, friends, power of attorney, and/ or substitute decision makers.

How many essential care partners/support people is an inpatient permitted?

For most hospital inpatients, only one essential care partner is permitted to visit at a time. This includes patients with a COVID-19 infection. However, the ECP may be required to follow additional precautions while in hospital.

Palliative care and other patients nearing end of life including patients receiving medical assistance in dying may have three (or more) support people at a time. The number is to be determined on a case-by-case basis by the clinical team, who will make every effort possible to safely accommodate the requested number of individuals to be present.

Patients in intensive care units, as well as critically ill patients in the emergency department, labour and birth and children and youth under 19 admitted to hospital are permitted to have two designated support people at a time.

Please note: Further restrictions may apply during an outbreak of COVID-19.

Does my support person have to be vaccinated?

No. Proof of vaccination is no longer required for essential care partners.

I have an appointment/test/procedure? Can I bring a support person with me?

Patients coming to hospital for cancer care, emergency, or ambulatory care clinics, appointments or procedures are permitted to have one support person accompany them.

What options are there for me to connect with my loved one?

Technology is available to allow virtual involvement of family and loved ones with patients in hospital. In cases where support people are not permitted, care teams will make every effort to support virtual visits. Please discuss this option with your loved one's care team.

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

All essential care partners/support people will be screened at the entrance. If they are an approved essential care partner/support person, they will be asked whether they have any COVID-19 symptoms, had contact with anyone who has COVID-19, or are waiting for COVID-19 test results for symptoms or potential exposure. If they answer yes to any of these questions, they will not be able to enter the hospital.

The approved essential care partner will also be asked to clean their hands, wear a 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 essential care partners/ support person(s).

Are appointments required for visiting a loved one?

Appointments are not required.

Are children permitted to visit a loved one?

The essential care partner must be at least 16 years old. Some exceptions may be made for compassionate reasons.