



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Visiting Guidelines at NHH – Updated May 2024

Q. 1 Is visiting permitted to admitted patients (“inpatients”) at NHH today?

If there is a declared outbreak, a patient has COVID-19 and/or any other communicable respiratory illness or is in isolation; visitor restrictions will be imposed to reduce the risk of spread, and to safeguard the health and safety of our health care teams and other patients. There is no daily maximum number of visitors or essential caregivers and no set visiting hours. Visits should not be planned during therapy or treatment times, and the privacy and healing environment of all patients and their families must be respected at all times.

Q. 2 My loved one is dying but they have COVID-19 and/or another communicable respiratory illness. Can I visit?

Yes. Each patient situation is unique and exceptions to visiting restrictions are made in circumstances where death is imminent, on consultation with the care team and NHH infection prevention and control leads. Speak with the care team to know what is appropriate for you and your loved one at this time. Have a concern? See **Q 14** below.

Q. 3 Are there set visiting hours?

There are currently no hospital-wide visiting hours at NHH. Please note: all those visiting before 8AM or after 8PM will be required to enter via the Emergency Department entrance. **See Q5** below. NHH continues to monitor visitor volumes and will adjust the open visiting policy as required should circumstances change in the community or the hospital.

Q. 4 Do I still need to wear a mask if I visit a patient at NHH?

Masking is now optional in all areas of the hospital, including in clinical and patient care settings. NHH remains mask friendly and will continue to provide free masks to any visitor, as requested. If you are feeling unwell or are symptomatic, you will be asked to postpone your visit. **See Q7**.

Q. 5 What door should I enter in if I’m visiting? Are there special requirements for late night visiting?

The hospital’s main entrance is locked nightly after 8PM and opened again at 8AM. Visitors to patients admitted to a hospital inpatient bed should note that NHH has special access requirements in place for evening and night hour visits. Visitors to those admitted to an inpatient bed continue to be encouraged to enter/exit at the [main front entrance](#), between the hours of 8AM and 8PM. Visitors to patients within the Emergency Department should enter via the Emergency Department entrance. All those visiting after 8PM and before 8AM must enter via the Emergency Department entrance as other entrances will be locked.

Q. 6 Are visits permitted to patients receiving care within the Emergency Department?

Yes, consistent with our inpatient visiting guidelines, visitors or essential caregivers are permitted to visit a patient receiving care in the Emergency Department. While there are no set visiting 'hours' the team expects that families minimize the number of individuals in the patient room at any one time.

Q. 7 Will visitors be screened before entering the hospital or required to show proof of vaccination?

Visitors to NHH are expected to self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses and visitors are accountable for deciding for themselves if they have any symptoms consistent with a respiratory infection (Ex. COVID-19, influenza). If you are experiencing potentially contagious symptoms of any kind, you will be asked to postpone your visit.

Q.8 I have a loved one in hospital, and I am worried about what they may be exposed to from other visitors, patients or even staff. What infection control measures have you put in place to reduce the risk??

The following is a summary of the infection prevention and control measures in place at NHH:

- **Daily self-screening by staff for symptoms of respiratory infection** – All individuals must pre-screen for symptoms and refrain from entering the building or community mental health offices in the event symptoms develop.
- **Mandatory use of appropriate PPE** – All staff, physicians, midwives, and essential caregivers/visitors are expected to pay strict attention to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements throughout the hospital. Visitors continue to have access to free masks on entry to the hospital and NHH's Community Mental Health offices.
- **Cohorting of patients considered "high risk contacts"** – Any patients identified as having a high risk of exposure to an infectious illness are co-located in the same area, tested, and cared for with appropriate precautions.
- **Mandatory vaccination of staff** – All staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers are required to be up to date with vaccinations. Booster vaccines continue to be offered to further reduce the risk of infection and spread.
- **Strict adherence to thorough hand hygiene practices** – Consistent hand hygiene will continue to be reinforced.
- **Enhanced environmental cleaning** – enhanced cleaning, with a focus on high-touch surfaces and equipment shared between patient rooms
- **Proactive communication** – Public notices are continually updated across NHH's communication channels, including doorways within/leading to the hospital and the importance of vigilance with PPE.

Q. 9 I have a loved one receiving chemotherapy treatments. Can I join them now for their treatment?

NHH continues to recommend outpatient visitors within our outpatient clinics, including chemotherapy and dialysis, be limited to what the patient deems as 'essential,' in consultation with their health care teams.

Q. 10 What about the Obstetrical area? Are there restrictions on the number of visitors to a new/birthing mom?

A. We continue to strongly recommend visitors to our Maternal/Child Care unit be limited to 'essential only', meaning birth partner and labour coach. Obstetrical patients are encouraged to discuss visiting with their care team if they wish to have more.

Q. 11 What if the patient is unable to identify that they wish to have a visitor?

In situations where the patient is not able to communicate, their substitute decision maker is expected to determine who will visit each day and communicate this to the care team.

Q. 12 Is the cafeteria open to the public?

Yes, the Main Street Bistro is open weekdays, 8AM to 2PM, and public service is available. For the Bistro's latest hours of operation please see the hospital website.

Q. 13 Can I bring food or beverages such as a coffee or tea, in to my loved one?

Yes, visitors are permitted to bring food/drink into patient care areas. If the food/drink items are for a patient, please speak with a member of their care team beforehand.

Q. 14 I have a question or concern regarding your Visiting Guidelines. Who should this be directed to?

Any individual patient and/or visitor with questions or concerns regarding NHH's evolving Visiting Guidelines is encouraged to contact the manager of the patient care unit during business hours. Call the main Switchboard at 905-372-6811 to be directed. In the event a visitor-related concern arises outside of business hours, when unit managers are not typically on site, the Clinical Operations Manager has been designated as the point person responsible for addressing questions regarding visiting, in consultation with the manager/senior manager on call.

Q. 15 Are these latest Visiting Guideline changes subject to change?

Yes. Our team is constantly monitoring the total volume of traffic into and out of the hospital to ensure safety can be maintained, as well as any sign of hospital-acquired infection connected to visiting. In the event it is found necessary for safety purposes, the hospital may revise Visiting Guidelines on consultation with Public Health, our internal Infection Prevention and Control leads, and our Patient and Family Advisory Council. It has always been our goal to maintain a safe balance between limited visiting/essential caregiver presence and infection control.

Due to the nature of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), specific visiting guidelines may be outlined by ICU staff to better protect the safety and privacy of patients.

-END-

Updated May 2024 – subject to change