

Clinical Guideline



Visitors to HNELHD facilities during COVID-19 pandemic

Sites where PCP applies	All HNELHD facilities
Target audience	All staff.
Description	This document provides guidance on visitor restrictions during COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Related Legislation, Australian Standard, NSW Ministry of Health Policy Directive or Guideline, National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard (NSQHSS) and/or other, HNE Health Document, Professional Guideline, Code of Practice or Ethics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Screening at NSW Health Facilities • COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Manual 2021 • Supporting visits and contact with family for inpatients in the last days of life 	
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BACKGROUND

HNELHD follows NSW Health advice regarding visitors and will:

- Limit the number of visitors in a ward at one time to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.
- Ensure that restrictions on the number of visitors a patient may receive are based on an assessment of the potential risk to both patient and visitors of infection to them and their families.
- Risk assess participants in care (carers and support person) to be able to continue providing care, connection and support.
- Screen anyone entering facilities for COVID-19 risks and symptoms as per NSW Health.
- Post [signs](#) at all entrances and triage areas to prompt HWs, patients, volunteers and visitors not to visit the facility or to self-identify to a specific location or person if they experience COVID-19 symptoms; atypical symptoms should also be considered especially in children, older persons and people with a disability.
- Identify patients who for clinical reasons should not have visitors (e.g. as they are deemed particularly vulnerable due to advanced age, co-morbidities etc.) and discuss alternative methods for meeting with their families and carers.
- Facilitate alternate means of communication for patients and visitors (e.g. facetime, zoom), in particular if the patients' clinical condition could be severely affected by lack of in-person contact.
- Assess the risks and benefits of visits by young children.
- Advise visitors to notify ward nursing staff before entering the patient's room/area.
- Ensure visitors are informed on how to perform hand hygiene and, if relevant, instructed how to don and doff PPE (see posters for application of [Surgical mask](#), [contact and droplet precautions](#), [airborne and contact precautions](#)).
- Advise visitors to maintain physical distancing whilst being anywhere in the facility, i.e. walking to ward, in waiting room as per local procedures etc.
- Consider culturally sensitive locations such as Aboriginal and refugee gathering/meeting areas, chapels, quiet rooms

Visitor Restrictions

NSW Health has determined in response to decreasing COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations, that NSW hospitals may ease visitor restrictions.

Patients are able to have two visitors per day. To limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission, some facilities or wards may need to further restrict visitors e.g. children, number of visitors at the bedside at a given time.

All visitors will be screened for COVID-19 risk factors and symptoms on entry to the healthcare facility and must agree to wear a mask (and other personal protective equipment as necessary) and follow advice of healthcare staff at all times. Children under 12 years of age are not required to wear a mask.

Visitors will be permitted if they:

- Have had:
 - at least two doses of a recognised vaccine if they are 12 years and older; or
 - one dose of a recognised vaccine if aged from 5 to 11 years; or
 - a medical exemption for vaccination
- Have not tested positive to COVID-19 within the last 10 days
- Are not a household contact or high-risk contact of someone who has COVID-19 in the previous 14 days
- Do not have COVID-19 symptoms
- Have not arrived from overseas in the past 7 days

Visitors who are COVID-19 positive, have COVID-19 symptoms or are identified as a high-risk contact of a COVID-19 case will generally not be able to visit a patient in the healthcare facility. An exemption is provided for maternity patients (see exemptions below) and may be considered on compassionate grounds for other patients.

Exemptions

Compassionate exemptions

Visitors who are COVID-19 positive, have COVID-19 symptoms or are identified as a high-risk contact of a COVID-19 case, OR are visiting a patient who is COVID-19 positive may be assessed for a visitor exemption. A Visitor Exemption form (see appendix 1) is to be completed and must be approved by the Director of Nursing or General Manager.

Paediatrics

Paediatric patients are able to have at least one parent or carer with the child at any time whilst in a HNELHD healthcare facility. The parent/carer is required to have a rapid antigen test (RAT) when the child is tested as part of COVID-19 surveillance testing.

Maternity

Birthing women are able to have two nominated participants in care, who are COVID-19 negative, for the duration of labour, birth and the postnatal period. Children may be considered as visitors on a case by case basis, dependant on the ward/units layout and capability. All unvaccinated participants in care/visitors to maternity patients require rapid antigen testing (including children).

Unvaccinated participants in care visiting the postnatal ward will require rapid antigen testing (RAT) on the woman's admission to the postnatal ward and every second day. The participant in care form (appendix 2) is to be completed and the participant in care is required to carry the completed form with them at all times to ensure access to the hospital and postnatal ward. The participant in care is to be provided with a copy of the maternity visitor information (appendix 3) which outlines the requirements and procedures for nominated participants in care.

An [exemption to the Public Health \(COVID-19 Self Isolation\) Order \(No 4\) 2021](#) is provided to allow a participant in care who is a COVID-19 positive case or a household contact to leave self-isolation to provide care and physical/emotional support in a birthing unit/environment during labour, birth and the immediate postnatal period. Where the exemption is utilised, the woman is only able to have one participant in care.

Informed consent from the pregnant women must be obtained and documented in the patient's healthcare record, and the healthcare facility must authorise the exemption. The participant in care **must** follow all requirements:

- contact the birthing unit prior to attendance at the healthcare facility
- apply PPE (minimum of surgical mask) prior to entry to the healthcare facility
- be escorted by a staff member directly to the birthing unit/environment
- be screened on arrival to ensure that the participant in care is able to understand and follow the directions of staff whilst in the birthing unit/environment and comply with directions to wear appropriate PPE safely
- remain in the allocated isolated room at all times
- have considered their hydration, nutrition and personal hygiene requirements
- wear PPE and following guidance from staff while in the birthing unit/environment
- maintain social distancing from healthcare workers wherever possible
- be aware that if the woman needs to be transferred to an operating theatre, they may not be able to attend
- be escorted directly out of the healthcare facility by a staff member once the birthing woman leaves the birthing unit/environment

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Changes
Version 7	23 March 2022	Visitor criteria added including vaccination status to align with NSW Health requirements.
Version 6	10 March 2022	Visitors increased to two per day; Updated Participant In Care Exemption.
Version 5	02 March 2022	Updates to align with changes to visitor restrictions as set by NSW Health.
Version 4	11 February 2022	Updates to align with changes to visitor restrictions as set by NSW Health.
Version 3	28 January 2022	Addition of exemption for a nominated participant in care for women during labour, birth and postnatal period; addition of postnatal participant in care form (appendix 2); addition of maternity visitor information (appendix 3).
Version 2	23 December 2021	Updates to align with new NSW Health visitor restrictions with increased community transmission of omicron variant of concern.
Version 1	17 September 2021	Original document

Appendix 1: Visitor exemption form

Visitor Exemption Form
Patient Details: Name _____ Facility _____ Ward _____
Visitor Details: Name _____ Phone _____ Relationship to patient _____
Reason for Visit: <input type="checkbox"/> Patient is approaching end of life <input type="checkbox"/> Patient is critical and/or unstable <input type="checkbox"/> Patient is antenatal/postnatal <input type="checkbox"/> Other reason – please state: _____
Reason for Exemption request: <input type="checkbox"/> Patient is COVID-19 positive <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor does not meet vaccination requirements (listed above) <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor is COVID-19 positive <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor has COVID-19 symptoms <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor has been identified as a high-risk contact of a COVID-19 case in the past 14 days
Review and Approval: Director of Nursing or General Manager Approved: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Date _____ Director of Nursing or General Manager Name _____ Director of Nursing or General Manager Signature _____

Appendix 2: Participant in Care Form

This form must be carried by the participant in care at all times to gain access to the hospital and postnatal ward, and be presented as required.

To ensure the safety of the women and newborns being cared for within the inpatient setting, we appreciate that the following safety measures are enacted and complied with during your visit to reduce any potential risk of exposure of COVID-19:

- Only two nominated Participants in Care (PIC) are allowed during your admission to hospital
- No children will be allowed
- Whilst the PIC is on the ward, we ask that the women also wear a mask during their presence to reduce potential community transmission
- Visiting hours will be 8am to 8pm
- A Participant in Care who is COVID-19 positive may be permitted to attend the birthing unit/environment for the purposes of providing care during labour, birth and the immediate postnatal period only.

This agreement may need to be adapted or rescinded at short notice if there are changes in guidance or exposure incidents that may impact the safety of patients, participants in care and staff.

Date of admission _____	
1. Patient Details	
Patient Name _____	MRN _____
Address _____	
Mobile _____	
2. Nominated Participant in Care – this information is to be completed for contact tracing purposes	
Name _____	Phone _____
Address _____	
Relationship to patient _____	
Vaccination states <input type="checkbox"/> Not vaccinated <input type="checkbox"/> Vaccinated (2 doses) <input type="checkbox"/> Booster received	
3. Participant in Care confirms they:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have not tested positive to COVID-19 in the past 14 days
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have HAD a negative COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) on woman's admission Date _____ Result _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will commit to adhere to QR check in
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will move directly from hospital entrance to patient bedside without visiting any other patients/areas of the hospital
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will wear a mask at ALL TIMES and maintain social distancing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will adhere to a RAT test on arrival to the ward and every 2 days during the woman's admission (if unvaccinated). RAT tests will be provided and the results confirmed by staff and documented below
Participant in Care Name _____	
Signature _____	Date _____

4. Participant in Care required to stay for medical reasons confirms they:	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Will wear a mask at ALL TIMES during admission to the inpatient setting and not leave the inpatient room unless necessary Will not leave the hospital grounds and minimise visiting areas in the hospital Will immediately alert staff if any symptoms develop and leave the hospital and get tested Will adhere to a RAT test on arrival to the ward and every 2 days during the woman's admission (if unvaccinated). RAT tests will be provided and the results confirmed by staff and documented below
Reason for exemption: <input type="checkbox"/> Women requiring assistance where both twins admitted to Postnatal ward <input type="checkbox"/> Women <16 years requiring parental/carer support and consent <input type="checkbox"/> Women with disability/mobility impairment requiring support i.e. muscular dystrophy, paraplegia <input type="checkbox"/> Women with a complication from birth requiring PIC to provide care to both woman and newborn for a short term period (daily review) <input type="checkbox"/> Women with declining mental health where PIC recommended to stay by psychiatry for support (daily review) <input type="checkbox"/> Other reason – case by case exceptions can be provided with approval from Manager	
Participant in Care Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____	
5. Manager (or delegate) Approval	
Manager Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____	

Daily Checks

COVID-19 Symptom Check							
Date							
Symptoms Y/N							
Close Contact Status							
Date							
Close contact Y/N							
COVID-19 PCR or RAT Test Results							
Date _____	Result _____	Verified by _____					
Date _____	Result _____	Verified by _____					
Date _____	Result _____	Verified by _____					
Date _____	Result _____	Verified by _____					
Date _____	Result _____	Verified by _____					
Date _____	Result _____	Verified by _____					
Date _____	Result _____	Verified by _____					

Appendix 3: Maternity Visitor Information

Due to the current risk of COVID-19 transmission, visitor restrictions remain in place across all NSW Health facilities, including maternity units.

We recognise having a trusted birth partner as a participant-in-care is known to make a significant difference to the safety and wellbeing of a woman during labour and birth. As a result we have made an exemption to the visitor restrictions for two nominated participants in care with strict requirements that must be adhered to ensure that all pregnant women, their families and our staff are kept safe.

Across all our facilities, birthing women are allowed two nominated participants in care, regardless of their vaccination status, for the duration of labour, birth and the postnatal period. They may visit the postnatal ward during the hours of 8am to 8pm.

There is an Exemption to the Public Health (COVID-19 Self Isolation) Order (No 4) 2021 that allows for a person required to self-isolate to attend a birthing unit for the purposes of providing care and support during labour, birth and the immediate postnatal period. The Exempt Person is subject to conditions, including that they must only attend with the consent of the pregnant woman.

The nominated participant-in-care will be required to:

- Undergo a rapid antigen test on arrival to the birth suite on the day of baby's birth and again on arrival to the postnatal ward and every second day if unvaccinated
- Wear a mask at all times and maintain social distancing
- Carry the completed and approved Participant in care form at all times, presenting the form to gain access to the hospital and postnatal ward, and as required
- Immediately notify staff if they return a positive COVID-19 test. The participant in care will be asked to leave the hospital immediately and self-isolate at home

Prenatal appointments

Currently, women are unable to be accompanied for prenatal appointments due to the risk of COVID-19 transmission. If you have specific concerns regarding these restrictions, you're encouraged to speak with your treating team regarding seeking an exemption on compassionate grounds.