

COVID-19 Visiting Update HSC – 9 April 2020

In response to the Government restriction of movements and to protect patients, their families and all our staff, the HSC are temporarily restricting the number of visitors across hospitals. With immediate effect all intensive care and general hospital visiting across Northern Ireland has now stopped.

The ONLY exceptions to this are:

- **PAEDIATRICS:** Any children admitted can be accompanied by one parent or carer at a time.
- **MATERNITY:** A person in labour can be accompanied by one birthing partner. There are no visitors permitted in ante-natal or post-natal ward areas.
- **NEONATOLOGY & PAEDIATRIC Intensive Care:** A patient in the neonatal ward/ paediatric ICU may be accompanied by one parent-visit duration to be agreed with the Ward Sister or Charge Nurse.
- **CORONARY CARE UNITS:** Due to local arrangements and/or circumstances in the clinical area visiting may not be permitted. Please ensure you contact the Ward Sister/ Charge Nurse in advance to agree if a visit is feasible and the duration and timing of the visit -normally a maximum of one hour.
- **PALLIATIVE (end of life) care outside of Intensive Care:** One visitor permitted to visit- duration and timing of the visit must be agreed in advance with the Ward Sister or Charge Nurse-normally be for a maximum of one hour. If patient is COVID -19 positive, visiting may be facilitated via smart phone/IPAD.
- **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES:** We recognise a small number of patients may have specific support requirements for their communication or challenging behaviour needs due to a pre-existing condition. To meet the needs of the individual this may necessitate 1 carer/family member for a period per day supporting the patient whilst in hospital. In these circumstances, please contact the Ward Sister/ Charge Nurse to discuss if this additional support is required during the admission and how this support can be facilitated. Please note any agreement is subject to change based on clinical need.

DO NOT visit if you are feeling unwell, especially if you have a high temperature or new persistent cough. Children are also not permitted to visit.

If you can, please arrange a '**virtual visit**' with your relative or friend on their smartphone or tablet. All HSC sites have access to free WI-FI and our staff will help set this up on the patient's device. Please be patient as our staff will have to prioritise clinical work and patient care. Staff will monitor the use of technology in order to ensure the privacy and dignity of patients in their care at all times.

- **INTENSIVE CARE: Whilst there is no visiting permitted to Intensive Care Units in Northern Ireland virtual visiting will be supported by staff when it is possible to do so via smart phone/ IPADS.**

Whilst this policy is for use in hospital settings we would encourage its adoption for people receiving PALLIATIVE (end of life) care in other settings such as Nursing Homes, Hospices and other settings.

Regarding people being cared for at home you should think carefully about social distancing and Stay at Home and restrict visiting to a minimum in order to protect your immediate and extended families, carer's, relatives and friends.

Your loved one's care is our priority and we will do the very best that we can for them. We appreciate this is a very worrying time and to ensure you are updated we are asking patients to nominate one family member (or carer) to contact us. This will help us ensure staff time is directed to delivering care to patients. If your loved one is not well enough or able to designate someone, we will discuss this with next of kin.

For further information see our Frequently Asked Question page.