

Welcoming visitors back to Niagara Health

Document updated July 13, 2020

Visitor Information

As part of gradually lifting visitor restrictions, visits are subject to certain conditions. This helps ensure the safety of everyone at the hospital.

Starting Monday, July 13, inpatients (those admitted to the hospital) may have one visitor during each block:

- 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

To help maintain a safe environment, including reducing the number of people entering the hospital, visitors may not rotate throughout the allotted time. It is recommended that each inpatient's family and friends agree to a visitation schedule in advance to ensure patients only have one visitor throughout each time block.

All visitors must be screened before entering our sites. The quickest and most efficient way to enter the building is to fill out the screening form available on our website and bring a copy to the hospital. Please be prepared to show this form to the screener upon entry.

Patients coming for clinic visits and other outpatient services:

Those coming to the hospital for appointments are still asked to come alone. This includes areas such as Diagnostic Imaging (eg. X-rays, CT scans, etc.), the Walker Family Cancer Centre and Dialysis Units, as well as Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centres. There are team members available to assist patients as needed.

Emergency Departments are not permitted to have visitors at this time.

Outpatients with extenuating circumstances are encouraged to contact their care provider at Niagara Health directly to discuss their needs. Anyone accompanying a patient to an appointment must be preapproved, at least 18 years old and pass screening.

Accessing the hospital:

There are limited entrances to our sites. All visitors are asked to enter through the main entrance of each site, with the exception being visitors at the Port Colborne Site and Douglas Memorial Site using the Urgent Care Centre entrance.

Limited exceptions

Limited exceptions to this policy will be made on a case-by-case basis. This includes:

- Compassionate reasons.
- Women in labour, as well as patients on the Paediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care units, may have one visitor.
- Other exceptions as determined by the care team. Please contact the manager on the unit where the patient is staying.

We will continue to look at our visiting policies going forward.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Planning your visit

Can two people visit at one time?

To support our infection prevention and control practices, only one visitor per patient is permitted in each block. Limiting the number of individuals in the hospital at one time allows for proper physical distancing, which is important to reducing the potential spread of the coronavirus.

Can inpatients have multiple visitors during each visiting block as long as they only visit one at a time?

No, at this time inpatients may only have one visitor throughout each time block. Reducing the number of people entering the hospital supports physical distancing and is an important infection prevention and control measure.

When am I able to visit?

Each inpatient may have one visitor during each time block:

- 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.
- 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

We recommend each patient's family and friends agree to a visitation schedule according to the above times in advance.

How long can I expect screening to take?

Screening must be completed every time you enter the hospital. As part of this process, a team member will ask you a series of questions. The time it takes for screening depends on the number of people coming into the hospital. This includes those with scheduled appointments. There will be signs to indicate where visitors are screened.

The quickest and most efficient way to enter the hospital is by filling out the screening form before your visit and bringing it with you to show the screeners. Visit our website to download the screening form.

Please remember to stay two-metres (six-feet) away from others while waiting to enter the building.

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What is the difference between an inpatient and someone coming for an appointment?

Inpatients are those who have been admitted to the hospital, meaning they are in a room on one of our units. This does not include patients coming for an appointment to areas such as Diagnostic Imaging (eg. X-Rays, CT scans, bone scans, etc.), the Walker Family Cancer Centre and Dialysis Units, as well as visits to our Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centres.

Patients coming for appointments are asked to come alone if possible. We have team members who would be happy to assist you. If you need to bring someone to assist you, please let your care team know ahead of time as all visitors need to be approved in advance. Anyone accompanying you must also pass hospital screening. Please visit the Resuming Services section on our website for more information.

Are there any exceptions? How are exceptions determined?

Exceptions are made by our care team on a case-by-case basis. This includes:

- Additional visitors and longer visiting hours may be arranged on compassionate grounds.
- Women in labour, as well as patients on the Paediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care units, are allowed to have one visitor.
- Other exceptions as determined by the care team.

Please contact the manager on the unit where the patient is staying if you have questions.

If I request an exception and it is denied, can I appeal this decision?

After a conversation with your care team where an exception to our visiting restrictions is denied, you may appeal the decision through Patient Relations. For urgent cases – decisions will be made within 24-hours. For non-urgent cases, you will receive acknowledgement of your appeal within one business day and decisions will be made within three business days.

If I am unable to visit during these hours, can I still drop essentials items off?

Unfortunately, we are no longer accepting deliveries for patients. All essential items, including food, must be brought to patients by a visitor during the designated visiting times.

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During your visit

Can I bring food to my loved one while visiting?

Visitors may bring food to their loved ones while at the hospital; however, food must be eaten in the patient's room and visitors must take any leftover food with them when they leave. We are no longer accepting food outside of the designated visiting times.

What's being done to support safety?

Everyone's health and safety is our primary concern. We're lifting our visitor restrictions in a safe and gradual way.

Measures include:

- Reducing the number of entrances/exits at all our sites.
- Screening everyone who enters the hospital. All visitors must pass screening to gain entry to the hospital. Download the screening form from our website to fill out before coming to the hospital.
- Encouraging physical distancing. Everyone should maintain a safe distance of two-metres or six-feet away from one another. There are signs, barriers and other markers in place as reminders. Please note only two people are permitted in the elevator at a time.
- Regular hand cleaning. There are sanitizer stations located throughout the building. Please clean your hands when you enter the building, throughout your stay, and when you leave.
- Limiting food services in the building. We ask that you maintain your distance while in line.
- Arranging seating in public areas to promote physical distancing. Please do not move the furniture.

Do I need to wear masks the whole time while visiting?

Yes. Visitors must bring their own mask and wear it throughout the hospital, and while visiting patients. Visitors who do not wear a mask will not be permitted to enter the building.

Can I take my loved one outside while visiting?

We are asking that visitors limit their movement while in the hospital. As part of this, we ask that you stay in the patient's room for the duration of your stay. Going for walks is not currently permitted. Family members/caregivers must not go to any common areas unless to purchase food/beverages from a cafeteria/café or use a public washroom.

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After your visit

How will I know when visiting hours are over?

An announcement will be made on the overhead speakers to indicate when visiting blocks are over (1:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.). We ask that you remember to maintain proper physical distancing while exiting and only have two people in the elevator at a time.

How do I pay for parking?

A gated system is in place at our St. Catharines, Greater Niagara General and Welland sites. Pay and display systems are in use at the Port Colborne and Fort Erie sites.

How to use our gated parking systems:

We recommend that you use your VISA or MasterCard, swiping upon entry and exit. Please note that the same card must be used to enter and exit. No ticket is required. If you take a ticket, you can also use your VISA or MasterCard to pay at the exit gate. Insert your ticket into the machine, followed by your VISA or MasterCard.

You can take a ticket upon entry into the parking lot. Bring the ticket into the hospital with you – do not leave it in your vehicle. There are kiosks at the entrances, and you are encouraged to pay using VISA or MasterCard before leaving the building.

Please note that the parking system cannot take debit or debit cards.

Please remember to maintain a proper physical distance from others while waiting to use the parking kiosks and clean your hands afterward. You may also wish to pay at the gate with your VISA or MasterCard to avoid lining up with others.

When parking in pay and display lots, please purchase a ticket in the machine and display it on your dashboard.

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Information for patients coming for an appointment

I'm coming in for an appointment, does this mean I can bring someone with me?

To help maintain physical distancing, patients coming for clinic visits or other outpatient services are asked to come alone. We have staff available to assist patients while in the hospital. If you require a support person, please speak to a member of your care team at Niagara Health before coming to the hospital. This support person must pass screening and follow the processes above.

For more information on the resumption of services at Niagara Health, visit NiagaraHealth.on.ca.

What is the difference between an inpatient and someone coming for an appointment?

Inpatients are those who have been admitted to the hospital, meaning they are in a room on one of our units. This does not include patients coming for an appointment to areas such as Diagnostic Imaging (eg. X-Rays, CT scans, bone scans, etc.), the Walker Family Cancer Centre and Dialysis Units, as well as visits to our Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centres.

Patients coming for appointments are asked to come alone if possible. We have team members who would be happy to assist you. If you need to bring someone to assist you, please let your care team know ahead of time as all visitors need to be approved in advance. Anyone accompanying you must also pass hospital screening. Please visit the Resuming Services section on our website for more information.

I'm bringing my loved one to an appointment. If I cannot enter, how will I be informed of their results or care needs?

We encourage family members and caregivers to follow up with the patient's care provider.

Please note: This printed handout is single-use only. Please do not share this handout with others. Visitors, please take this handout home with you.

