
VISITOR POLICY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Summary of February 23, 2021 changes:

- Addition to policy to permit a single Non-Essential Visitor for inpatients not on Enhanced Respiratory Isolation, with restrictions related to screening and visitation hours
- Addition of detail regarding access to cafeterias, coffee shops, and gift shops
- Reorganization of document
- This policy will be implemented no later than one week after approval.

Background

The Mass General Brigham Visitor Policy aims to protect the health and safety of patients, visitors, and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the purposes of this policy, visitors include all individuals who are not patients or Mass General Brigham employees who seek entrance to Mass General Brigham premises. Facilities should continue to support alternatives to in-person visits including accessible electronic methods for communication. Any requests for visitors or circumstances not included in this policy will be addressed by individual facilities.

Additional details regarding implementation may be provided by individual Mass General Brigham facilities. Please refer to your local institution's implementation guide for further information:

[Brigham and Women's Hospital](#)
[Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital](#)
[Cooley Dickinson Hospital](#)
[McLean Hospital](#)
[Massachusetts Eye and Ear](#)
[Massachusetts General Hospital](#)

[Martha's Vineyard Hospital](#)
[Nantucket Cottage Hospital](#)
[North Shore Medical Center](#)
[Newton Wellesley Hospital](#)
[Spaulding Rehabilitation Network](#)
[SRN-Brighton](#)
[Wentworth Douglas Hospital](#)

Policy

1. Definition of Visitors

- a. **Essential Visitor.** Essential Visitors are defined as
 - i. Visitors to patients receiving end-of-life care
 - ii. Vendors and Contractors whose urgent non-deferrable services are deemed essential for the functioning of Mass General Brigham activities
 - iii. Emergency Services Personnel (e.g., EMS, Fire)
 - iv. Law Enforcement

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- v. Volunteers determined to be essential for the functioning of Mass General Brigham as permitted by the local institution
 - vi. Others as may be designated by local Hospital Incident Command or their designee.
 - b. **Support Person.** Support Persons are defined as:
 - i. Birth partners, parents/caregivers of pediatric patients, attorneys of patients, and designated Support Persons for patients with disabilities ([see Disability and Support Person Fact Sheet](#)).
 1. Patients with disabilities include patients with cognitive disabilities, significant mobility limitations, communication barriers, sensory issues or behavioral concerns. Some examples include patients with autism spectrum disorder, genetic disorders, dementia, quadriplegia, visual impairment and deafness ([see Disability and Support Person Fact Sheet](#)).
 - c. **Non-Essential Visitors.** Non-Essential Visitors are defined as all other visitors to Mass General Brigham facilities aged 18 years and older.
 2. **Screening of Visitors.** Visitors will be screened and excluded from visiting if they:
 - a. Have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 per current Mass General Brigham guidance.
 - b. Have active COVID-19 infection and require isolation.
 - c. For Non-Essential visitors only: are non-compliant with the [MA Travel Order](#).
 3. **Behavior of Visitors**
 - a. **Masking.** Per the [Universal Mask Policy](#), non-hospital issued personal protective equipment (PPE) is not permitted, and all visitors will be provided one hospital-issued medical or procedural/surgical mask immediately upon arrival and are required to wear the mask continually until they leave the building, including in patient rooms. Some Support Persons may require accommodations for PPE use according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ([See ADA and Mask Accommodations Flow Chart](#)). Additional PPE will be provided as indicated.
 - b. **Access to cafeterias, coffee shops, and gift shops.** Access will only be permitted for Essential Visitors and Support Persons in exceptional circumstances.
 - c. **Arrival and exit.** Visitors must exit the hospital directly and expeditiously upon completing their visit.
 4. **Restrictions for Non-Essential Visitors**
 - a. For patients who do not qualify for an Essential Visitor or Support Person, a single Non-Essential Visitor per day is permitted for inpatients. Visiting hours are provided; exceptions to these are at the discretion of local leadership.

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- i. Acute Care Hospital Visiting Hours: 1pm-8pm
 - ii. Post-Acute Care Facility Visiting Hours: 3pm-8pm
 - b. Non-Essential Visitors are not permitted to visit patients on Enhanced Respiratory Isolation.
 - c. Non-Essential visitors are not permitted in any other areas, including Emergency Departments, Ambulatory locations, and Procedural locations.
5. **Restrictions for Essential Visitors and Support Persons**
 - a. A patient is allowed one Essential Visitor at a time in the hospital. Exceptions may be made for up to two Essential Visitors at the discretion of local leadership in collaboration with the patient's primary team, the patient, and their family, for patients receiving end-of-life care, pediatric patients, and patients with disabilities ([see Disability and Support Person Fact Sheet](#))
 - b. A patient is allowed one Support Person at a time in the hospital.
 - c. No Essential Visitors or Support Persons under the age of 18 years old are allowed in the hospital, unless the Essential Visitor or Support Person is a child of a patient.
 - d. Essential Visitors and Support Persons waiting to visit a patient should wait outside the hospital, rather than in hospital waiting rooms, until the time of their visit.
 - e. Individual facilities may impose additional restrictions on visitation depending on location of care (i.e., Emergency Departments, Procedural Areas, and Ambulatory locations) and other considerations to protect the health and safety of patients, visitors, and staff.
 - f. Essential Visitors or Support Persons to patients on Enhanced Respiratory Isolation will:
 - i. Be informed of the risks to their health of visiting.
 - ii. Be instructed that if they will maintain a distance of 6 feet from the patient, then no additional PPE is required. If they anticipate close contact with the patient, then the visitor will be instructed to don a gown, gloves, and eye protection in addition to their mask and instructed on removal of PPE prior to exit of the room. Visitation during aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs) should be avoided when possible; when Essential Visitors or Support Persons are present during AGPs they will be offered a 3M 8210 or 3M 8210 plus (or equivalent model as directed by the Mass General Brigham Supply Chain) N-95 respirator. Fit testing will not be offered. When exiting the patient room, the N-95 will be doffed with gowns, gloves, and eye protection, and surgical mask replaced for exit from the facility.
 - iii. Be instructed to perform hand hygiene frequently, before entry to the room, and upon exit from the room.
6. **Support Persons to pediatric patients**
 - a. There are no additional restrictions on time spent with the patient in the patient's room or requirements for physical distancing within the room, to permit the most supportive care environment for children.

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- b. The same parent/caregiver will be encouraged to stay with the patient during the entire admission, with no access to shared patient and family spaces on the pediatric inpatient unit. An additional parent/caregiver is permitted in patient care areas at discretion of local leadership in collaboration with the patient's primary team, the patient, and their family,.
 - c. Decisions about whether the parent/caregiver can accompany the patient off the inpatient unit for a procedure will be made on a case-by-case basis.
 - d. Asymptomatic parents/caregivers of pediatric patients hospitalized with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 will be instructed to practice isolation if they return home.
 - e. Local leadership may determine the appropriateness of PPE in addition to universal mask in specific parent/caregiver-child situations.
- 7. Support Persons to patients with disabilities.**
- a. The same designated support person (or small team of alternating Support Persons with only one person on site at any given time) will be encouraged to stay with the patient throughout the admission, with no access to shared patient and family spaces on the inpatient unit.
 - b. Decisions about whether the Support Person can accompany the patient off the inpatient unit for a procedure will be made on a case-by-case basis by local leadership.
 - c. Local leadership may determine the appropriateness of PPE in addition to universal mask in specific contexts regarding patients with disabilities and their Support Person.
 - d. Asymptomatic Support Persons of patients with disabilities hospitalized with confirmed COVID-19 will be instructed to practice quarantine if they return home, as they are considered exposed to the hospitalized patient with confirmed COVID-19.
- 8. Visitors to Ambulatory Locations or Procedural Areas**
- a. No visitors are allowed in the ambulatory setting.
 - b. Practices will accommodate one Support Person for patients with disabilities (see [Disability and Support Person Fact Sheet](#)) who require a Support Person.
 - i. If there are concerns with a support person for a patient with disabilities, please contact the Mass General Brigham Office of General Counsel (OGC, 617-278-2020)
 - c. Additional exceptions for one Support Person may be granted by ambulatory practice leadership for:
 - i. Patients requiring an additional person to understand their clinical diagnosis/procedure/instructions
 - ii. Pediatric practices, or other practices caring for pediatric patients, may allow more than one parent or guardian
 - iii. Patients receiving end-of-life-care
 - iv. Anticipated birth partners
 - v. Law Enforcement working in official capacity

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- d. Patients may be permitted to arrive to their appointment with children under the age of 18 on a case by case basis per local leadership.
 - e. Exceptions should be documented in Epic by ambulatory personnel in advance of the visit whenever possible ([see Disability and Support Person Fact Sheet](#)).
- 9. Visitors to Research Laboratories or Other Non-Clinical Entities**
- a. Visitors to to research laboratories or other non-clinical entities are only permitted if they meet the definition of Essential Visitor. It is the responsibility of the Mass General Brigham host to ensure compliance of an Essential Visitor.

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