

## **National Visiting Guidance**

All hospitals in Ireland welcome visitors. Visiting time is regarded as an important part of the patient's day.

However, the welfare of the patient must always be taken into consideration and certain restrictions may be imposed on visiting if the patient is likely to become unduly upset or tired.

The Health Service Executive has developed this National Visiting Guidance to protect our patients, their families and friends, and our staff.

The need for privacy and the potential for the spread of infection means that continuous visiting hours are not in the patients' interests, and from time to time visiting may be further restricted to prevent and control infection.

This guidance document reflects a balance between the needs of patients, their visitors, hospital staff and hospital procedures.

### **Purpose**

- To maintain a safe, secure and comfortable environment for patients and staff
- To enhance patient confidentiality
- To help the hospital to organise the delivery of treatment and care by limiting and timing the numbers of visitors

This guidance document should apply to all patients and visitors unless there is prior agreement from the Nurse Manager on duty.

Visitors of seriously ill patients and carers who are participating in the care of a patient will be dealt with sympathetically.

## Guidance

### General Ward Areas

- Visiting is permitted at the following times: **2.00pm – 4.00pm & 6.30pm – 8.30pm daily**
- Visiting within reason outside of these times must be discussed and agreed with the Nurse Manager on duty
- Recommended visiting time is twenty minutes, and no more than two persons should visit a patient at any one time
- Children under 12 years other than the patient's own children should not be brought to visit. Children must be under the supervision of an adult at all times while in the hospital
- A patient has the right to decline visitors
- Visiting hours may be extended for compassionate reasons or where relatives assist with patient care or to facilitate educational sessions with family members and staff.
- The Ward Manager can request that visitors leave if the number present or the length of the visit is deemed excessive
- Additional restrictions will apply from time to time, e.g. during outbreaks of infectious diseases
- Certain hospitals may implement stricter and more controlled visiting policies to suit the needs of patients in that particular hospital, e.g. "Quiet Times" in Maternity Hospitals
- Relatives and friends are requested not to visit if they have sore throats, flu, vomiting and/or diarrhoea or other infections, because of the risk of introducing infection to the ward.
- Visiting hours may also be restricted for medical or emergency situations. All exceptions and restrictions are at the discretion of nursing staff on duty, arrangements should be made as far in advance as is possible unless it is an emergency situation.
- Ward entrance doors shall remain closed outside of visiting hours. A ward patrol should be conducted after visiting time has expired to ensure the hospital's policy is adhered to
- Hospital Policies are in place to allow the hospital provide the best possible care to our patients

**It is acknowledged that individual hospitals may have requirements for different visiting times for different units. In such circumstances, local arrangements should supersede the national guidance and each exceptional unit should agree their own specific visiting arrangements that complement the national guidance document.**

**Maternity Department - Ante Natal Ward, Delivery Suite & Post Natal Ward**

- Access to the labour ward is by swipe card only
- Women admitted in labour may have their birth partner/partner with them throughout labour. However, if there is a threat to maternal/child safety the Doctor / Midwife may request the birth partner/ partner to leave
- The woman's partner or designated other visitor will be issued with a visitors' card on her admission. This allows the named individual to visit at any time between 8.30am and 9.00pm. The nominated card must be produced for each visit.
- The woman's own children may visit at any time with the card holder for short visits only, but no other children are allowed.
- For other visitors the rules as for general ward areas apply, but no more than two visitors and the woman's partner should be present at any one time.
- Visiting hours may be extended for compassionate reasons. Visiting hours may also be restricted for medical or emergency situations. All exceptions and restrictions are at the discretion of midwifery/nursing staff on duty.

**Accident & Emergency Department**

- Due to space restrictions a maximum of two persons may attend with a patient, subject to limitations imposed by staff
- Children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian at all times
- In the case of night-time admissions to wards from A&E, patients should be accompanied by a maximum of two people

### **Intensive Care Unit, Coronary Care Unit & High Dependency Unit**

- As many patients are seriously ill, visiting is restricted to immediate family members for short periods of time only, with a maximum of two people at any one time (local guidelines exist to guide families and staff in determining whether siblings should visit)
- All visitors are required to use the intercom (if available) and await a reply before entering these units
- Visitors may be requested to leave the unit during procedures. If so please be sensitive to the needs of patients, medical and nursing staff

### **Children's Ward**

- General ward visiting guidance applies to children's wards
- Children under 12 years other than the patient's own siblings should not be brought to visit, siblings should be accompanied and supervised by an adult at all times
- Parents / guardians may visit from 8.30am – 9.00pm daily
- One parent / guardian may stay overnight with the child
- The Unit Manager may give permission to alter these arrangements in some very specific cases

### **Neonatal Unit**

- Parents and Grandparents only may visit in the Neonatal Unit.
- No children are permitted to visit
- The Unit Manager may give permission to alter these arrangements in some very specific cases

## **Visitors' Responsibilities**

As a visitor to our hospital we ask you to respect and follow this Visiting Guidance, which applies to both public and private patients

### **Please:**

- Use hand hygiene facilities as available when entering and exiting hospital wards
- Consider other patients' needs for rest and privacy
- Have consideration for staff doing their job
- Be polite and courteous, and comply with any request to leave the patient's room, to facilitate care
- Observe confidentiality – you may see or hear things of a private and confidential nature
- Stay away if you might be an infection risk to others or if you feel unwell yourself
- Help keep our hospital clean and inform staff of any cleaning concerns
- Ensure any visiting children are well behaved and are never left on a ward unaccompanied
- Be responsible for the safety and security of your belongings
- Comply with isolation policies and signage, especially if visiting multiple patients. When visiting an isolated patient this patient should be the last person visited rather than the first due to possible spread of infection
- Refrain from touching dressings, drips, catheters etc.
- Always enter and exit the hospital through the main entrance doors or as specified
- Follow hospital restrictions on the use of mobile phones
- Do not sit/lie on beds
- Do not bring in food/beverages for patients without prior consultation
- Follow hospital policy in respect of gifts of flowers and fruit to patients
- Do not access unauthorised areas, e.g. Ward Kitchens
- Follow hospital car parking regulations
- Do not visit while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs

## National Visiting Guidance



### **National Visiting Guidance References & Submissions**

National Working Group – National Hygiene Services Standard  
Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children Crumlin, Visiting Policy  
National Maternity Hospital, Visitor Information Services  
Rotunda Hospital, Visitor Policy  
South Eastern Health Board, Visitors Information Leaflet  
Report of the South Eastern Health Board Regional Review Group on Hospital Visiting Arrangements (2003)  
A Charter of Rights for Hospital Patients' (1992)  
Cork University Hospital Visiting Policy  
Mater University Hospital Limited Visitors' Policy  
Beaumont Hospital Patient Information Booklet (2000)  
Department of Public Health, Western Health Board, Patient and visitor information leaflet  
Open Hours For All – A Study of the Views of Women Regarding visiting in the Rotunda Hospital (2002)  
The Rotunda Hospital, Information for Your Visitors  
Patient Partnership Group Waterford Regional Hospital  
Irish Patients Association  
The National Partnership Forum  
Department of Health and Children  
Kerry General Hospital  
Letterkenny General Hospital  
Cork University Hospital  
Bantry General Hospital  
Naas General Hospital  
St. Finbarr's Hospital  
Children's University Hospital, Temple Street  
Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown  
Mayo General Hospital  
Mid Western Hospitals Group  
North Eastern Hospitals Group  
St. Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny  
Waterford Regional Hospital  
Erinville Maternity Hospital  
Rotunda Hospital  
Mater University Hospital Limited  
Portiuncula Hospital  
Coombe Women's Hospital  
South Tipperary General Hospital  
Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel  
Mercy University Hospital, Cork  
Lourdes Orthopaedic Hospital, Kilcreene  
Environmental Health Officers Association  
St. John's Hospital, Limerick  
Mid Western Regional Hospital Ennis  
The Adelaide, Meath and National Children's Hospital, Tallaght  
Dublin Academia Teaching Hospitals CEO Group  
West / North Western Hospitals Group