



NEWS RELEASE

From Halton Healthcare

For Immediate Release

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Halton Healthcare announces new visiting restrictions

In response to increasing COVID cases in the community and the movement of Halton Region into the red zone of the Provincial COVID-19 Framework, Halton Healthcare has introduced additional visiting restrictions at its hospitals.

The move comes as the organization continues to try to balance the health and safety of those inside the hospital with the importance of maintaining patient visits. “Family support is always important, especially at this time,” said Judy Linton, Senior Vice-President Patient Experience & Chief Nursing Executive. “However, with community cases on the rise, we also need to ensure that we are protecting our patients and our healthcare teams. One of the ways we can do this is by reducing the number of people coming into our buildings. These are not decisions that are made lightly.”

The change was implemented at Milton District Hospital and Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital on Monday, November 23 and will be in effect at Georgetown Hospital on Friday, November 27.

All patients are now being asked to identify a limited number of people who can visit them on a regular basis. Most patients will be asked to identify two people who will be allowed to them visit during their hospitalization. These two visitors must coordinate their visits as patients will continue to be restricted to one visitor a day within one of the visiting time periods (11am – 2pm OR 4pm – 7pm).

Patients with exceptional circumstances (ie. patients in ICU, at End-of-Life) will be allowed up to four people to be identified as designated visitors who can visit two at a time. Visiting times for patients in these situations are determined on a case-by-case basis.

COVID-19 positive patients and those in Droplet Contact Precautions waiting for COVID-19 test results are not permitted visitors, unless their medical status changes significantly for the worse.

Patients coming to the Emergency Departments (EDs) should only be accompanied by a support person if necessary.

Individuals coming to the hospital for an outpatient appointment, such as a diagnostic appointment, are encouraged to attend their appointment alone. If support is required, they may be accompanied by one person.

All visitors to the hospital are screened at the entrances, asked to wear a mask during their visit and follow other COVID-19 protocols including physical distancing and good hand hygiene.

“We are relying on those people who are coming to visit to be respectful of the visiting guidelines for when they are in the hospital. We are also asking that they self-monitor and not visit if they are unwell,” continued Ms. Linton. “We don’t want to implement further restrictions unless we are compelled to do so.”

The hospital’s visiting policy has changed throughout this pandemic based on the directions of the provincial government. Halton Healthcare had initially restricted all visiting at the outset of the pandemic and over time has relaxed the policy to reintroduce visitors for patients.

For those who are not able to visit in person, Halton Healthcare has two programs to connect patients with their families; *Virtual Visiting* and *Email a Patient*.

The **Virtual Visiting Program** helps patients visit with their loved ones over the internet while visitor restrictions are in effect. Those who are not able to use their own devices to communicate through audio or video chats can receive assistance with hospital devices and technology platforms. The Virtual Visiting Program is available seven days a week between the hours of 9:00 am and 9:00 pm.

The **Email a Patient Program** is an established program at Halton Healthcare allowing individuals to send emails to patients in the hospital when they are not able to visit in person. The email is printed by one of our team members, sealed and delivered to the patient.

“While we have had to restrict visitors to our hospitals for safety during this pandemic, we want to ensure that patients can stay in touch with their families and friends,” concludes Ms. Linton. “These programs have been very well received and allow us to protect our patients, staff and community while utilizing technologies to provide alternative ways to visit and communicate.”

To learn more about the visiting guidelines or locate the request form for virtual visiting please visit the COVID-19 section of the Halton Healthcare website www.haltonhealthcare.com.

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