

## **For Families: Communication & Personal Items in Acute Care for COVID-19 Positive/Potential Patients**

As part of Northern Health's response to COVID-19, we've changed our visiting rules to make sure we're protecting patients, staff, and families. Starting immediately, no visitors can see patients who are admitted to hospital with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 positive diagnosis, under any circumstance.

Visitor restrictions are based on the direction provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada and provincial public health bodies.

### **Communicating to my family member**

It's part of Northern Health's commitment to patient- and family-centred care that both patients and families receive timely, complete, and accurate information in order to effectively participate in care and decision-making.

When your loved one is in the hospital with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 positive diagnosis, this need is magnified because the physical presence and involvement of yourself or other family members isn't possible. It's essential that open lines of communication between health care teams, the patients, and their family is established immediately.

### ***How can I communicate with my loved one if I'm not allowed into the hospital?***

Our teams are working on ways to keep families and patients in touch with one another in a way that won't compromise their safety. Shortly after admission, a member of the hospital health care team will reach out to your loved one's spokesperson to create a communication plan. This will include planning for:

- a. How to provide you with patient information/updates:
  - How would you like to be communicated with?
  - When is the best time to reach you to provide patient information/updates? (E.g., set time during the day, when there's a significant change in status)
  - Confirmation of who on the care team will be contacting you (E.g., the nurse, the doctor)
- b. How to connect you (or family members) with your loved one:
  - How would you like to communicate with your loved one? (E.g., FaceTime on a personal phone/tablet)
  - When is the best time to connect you with your loved one?
  - Confirmation of who on the care team will be facilitating the communication between you and your loved one (E.g., the nurse, the doctor)
- c. Provide you with a facility contact if you need to reach out outside of the above times.

***What are some other ways I can communicate with my loved one?***

- Bring a cell phone or tablet (and charger) to leave with your loved one to use while in the hospital
- Your loved one can use the hospital's phone to call you

Northern Health continues to look at creative strategies to increase communication while your loved one is in hospital. If you have particular strategies you think would work for you and your loved one, please communicate this to their health care team.

***Who can we contact if we have questions or concerns?***

You'll be provided with contact information of a main contact(s) throughout your loved one's stay. We encourage you to reach out to this person with any questions or concerns. They may not always be able to answer right away, but they'll get back to you as soon as they are able.

**Transferring Personal Items*****Can I drop off personal items (e.g., clothing, shampoo) to my loved one in hospital?***

Yes, please make sure a person without COVID-19 symptoms is responsible for gathering and packing the personal items into a plastic sealable bag:

1. Ensure all personal items are clean.
2. Choose sealable plastic bags (e.g., Ziploc bag) to put the items in.
3. Disinfect the entire bag(s), including the handle, inside, and outside, with one of the following approved disinfectants: bleach, ammonia based cleaner, alcohol based cleaner, or hydrogen peroxide based cleaner.
4. Place the items into cleaned bags and seal.
5. Bring bag to the facility and clean the outside of the sealed bag with approved disinfectants at the facility.
6. Leave bag in designated secure location. It will be required to sit for at least 10 minutes prior to anyone picking it up so the bag can dry.

A member of the care team will confirm they've received the package in a timely manner.

***Can I drop off food (e.g., a prepared meal) to my loved one in hospital?***

No. Due to the demands on our health care teams at this time we're unable to guarantee the ability to follow safe food practices. For the safety of your loved one, we ask that you don't bring in any food, perishable or not, into the hospital.

## **More Information/Resources**

**For reliable information about COVID-19, we recommend:**

- Northern Health: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/coronavirus-information-covid-19#northern-health#sites-for-trusted-information>
- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
- The Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus.html>
- The BC Centre for Disease Control: <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Coronavirus-FAQ-English.pdf>

## **General Contact Information**

- Northern Health COVID-19 Online Clinic & Information Line: **1-844-645-7811**
- BC Govt. COVID-19 Helpline: **1-888-COVID19** or **1-888-268-4319**