Changes to Visiting

It’s really important that patients can have support from those who matter most to them while they are in hospital. However, to protect against the risk of COVID-19, it is sometimes necessary to temporarily restrict visiting. These decisions are made very carefully, and will be kept under close review.

Up to date information about any current visiting restrictions in NHSGGC is available on the NHSGGC website. Ward staff will also be able to tell you about the current visiting arrangements in that ward.

This leaflet gives you guidance about safe visiting during COVID-19.

Who can visit?

Up to date information about any current visiting restrictions in NHSGGC is available on the NHSGGC website. Ward staff will also be able to tell you about the current visiting arrangements in that ward.

Visiting arrangements will be organised as flexibly as possible to ensure the safety of patients, family and staff.

There may be situations where staff may have to ask you to step outside the ward temporarily or to leave the ward during your visit. We will always explain when this is necessary. Your support and understanding when this is necessary is appreciated to ensure everyone’s safety and privacy.

How do I arrange a visit?

Please contact the ward to arrange a visit in advance, so we can all follow physical distancing rules. **It is important that you do not come to the ward without an appointment** – we may need to ask you to leave and come back at another time.

You can find a list of telephone numbers for all wards and departments on the NHSGGC website or you can contact the hospital switchboard.

Can other people visit with me?

We understand in some cases, the family member chosen to visit may need to be accompanied by another person, for example a child visiting a parent or sibling, or a frail elderly person who cannot attend the hospital independently. Ward staff will facilitate the presence of this additional person and will explain how we will support this.

Why might I not be able to visit?

COVID-19 is still with us and can be transmitted easily. To reduce risks careful attention to infection prevention and control measures around family support still need to be maintained.
There are many vulnerable patients in our hospital wards and in particular, some types of illness and types of treatments where we need to proceed with extreme caution, ensure a risk assessment is undertaken appropriately, and reassess as and when circumstances change.

If a visit is not possible, we will provide you with an explanation why this is necessary. We will keep this under review where possible and will reassess as circumstances change.

**You must not visit if you are unwell or if you have been advised to self-isolate.**

**If visiting is further restricted, are there situations when a visit is possible?**

If there is a need to further restrict visiting to a particular ward or area for example due to an outbreak of COVID-19 or rapidly increasing community transmission, **essential visits will continue.**

Examples of the type of situations where “essential visiting” is possible are as follows:

- a birth partner supporting a woman during hospital visits.
- a person receiving end-of-life care – we expect this to be defined as flexibly and compassionately as possible, to support patients at the end of life spending meaningful time with their loved ones in their final days, weeks, or months.
- to support someone with a mental health issue, or dementia, or a learning disability or autism, where not being present would cause the patient to be distressed.
- When someone is receiving information about life-changing illness or treatments
- to accompany a child in hospital
- A child in hospital is entitled to have one or both parents or carers present to support them. A child in hospital should be allowed visits from siblings or other children
- In these and other similar situations where support from another person is essential for advocacy and wellbeing.

Staff will take as flexible, person centred, and compassionate an approach as possible in applying this guidance. Further information about essential visits is available on the [NHSGGC website](https://www.healthboard.scot.nhs.uk/).

Carers, those providing essential care or emotional support, or spiritual care are not considered visitors for the purposes of this guidance and will continue to be permitted to attend a patient in hospital, including in areas where essential visits only are in place.

**What if I or another family and friends cannot visit?**

If you cannot visit in person, please use technology such as social media and phone calls to stay in touch. If the person you want to speak to does not have access to their own device, please access our [Person Centred Virtual Visiting service](https://www.healthboard.scot.nhs.uk/). All wards have iPads to allow ‘virtual visits’ (video call) allowing patients to see and talk to the people who matter to them virtually.

**What do I need to do before I visit?**

You should have a **negative lateral flow test** a maximum of 24 hours before your visit – the nearer to the visit the better.

Information on how to order Lateral Flow Tests is on the [Scottish Government’s website](https://www.gov.scot/).
What will happen when I arrive at the ward?

On your arrival at the ward and every time you visit the ward, staff will check that you are well and ask you some questions about your health to make sure it is safe for you to visit. They will ask you the following questions:

- Are you feeling unwell?
- Do you have a persistent cough, loss of taste or smell, flu like symptoms or a fever?
- Are you self-isolating because you have been in contact with anyone suspected as having, or has tested positive for COVID-19?

You will **not be allowed to visit** if you do not pass this safety check.

What must I do when I visit?

It is important for your safety and for the safety of patients and staff that you do the following:

- **Face mask** must be worn at all times, unless there is a reason why you cannot.
- **Avoid communal gatherings** in public areas of the hospital. Take the stairs if possible to avoid waiting in lift lobbies. Your movement around other areas of the hospital must be limited as much as is reasonably possible.
- **Clean your hands** using the hand sanitiser before and after you leave the ward or department and when you touch anything.
- **Two metres distance** should be maintained from others where possible.
- **Self-isolate - You must not** attend if you are unwell, if you are a household contact or have otherwise been told that you are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and have been advised to self-isolate or have to self-isolate for another reason.

**Respiratory hygiene** also remains important, please cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, wiping or blowing your nose. You should throw the disposable tissue in a bin immediately and wash your hands.

Will I need to use any personal protective equipment (PPE) during the visit?

There might be situations where staff will need to ask you to use **PPE – such as a face mask, apron, gloves etc.** If this is required, the staff will help you to put this on correctly and to dispose of it before you leave.

If you are a family member or carer for the person, you are visiting and helping to support aspects of their care such as supporting nutritional intake at meal times, or other personal care you will be provided with necessary PPE to undertake this activity.

Will I be able to touch my relative or friend during the visit?

You are able to touch your relative or friend (for example, hold their hand, hug or kiss them) – however, please remember that keeping a 2 metre distance wherever possible will reduce the chances of COVID-19 or other respiratory viruses spreading to you, your relative or friend, other patients, and staff.
Can I go out of the ward for a walk with my relative or friend if able?
Please check with the ward staff first. It may be possible to go a walk to the main communal areas of the hospital or hospital grounds as long as you follow social distancing measures and wear a face covering.

Will I be able to use the facilities in the hospital?
Retail outlets and hospital dining facilities are open on all our hospital sites. If using any of these facilities, you must make sure you take all the necessary safety measures required – wear your face mask, maintain a 2 metre social distance where possible, provide your contact details for Trace and Protect, apply hand sanitiser on entry and when leaving the facility etc.

Where possible you should use the toilet facilities provided for members of the public. We prefer that you do not use patient and staff toilets, unless there is no other option available.

Where can I find further information?
Further information about the new visiting arrangements is available on the NHSGGC Website.

If you require this information in an accessible format such as large print or Braille, or in a community language, please email person.centred@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

Thank you so much for your co-operation and support.