

SWEDISH COVID-19 PATIENT SUPPORTER GUIDELINES / “VISITOR POLICY”

Effective Friday September 3rd at 8am

As COVID-19 continues to be a concern in the Puget Sound, Swedish remains committed to the safety of caregivers, patients, and community members. In response, we have created data-driven policies and will continue to adjust guidelines in order to best align with the evolving climate of COVID-19. Safety and high-quality care for our patients is our highest priority and we require **universal masking, hand hygiene, physical distancing, and screening protocols for all persons entering our facilities.**

To keep our hospitals and facilities as safe as possible, we continue to restrict well-wishing visitors who are visiting loved ones in-person. However, we understand our patients also have many medical needs requiring compassionate care and we recognize the support of loved ones is vital to recovery. We fully support virtual visiting methods and will continue to promote creative ways for patients to connect with loved ones.

As experts continue to monitor the trending numbers for COVID-19 cases in our area, and because there sometimes is no substitute for in-person support and compassion, Swedish’s “Visitor Policy” will be adjusted. **Effective Friday September 3rd, 2021 at 8AM** updated visitation restrictions will apply.

Visitation for patients diagnosed with or under investigation for COVID-19 infection is not allowed. Visitation must be approved on a limited case-by-case basis only.

In the **In-Patient** areas of Swedish, **each patient may have one (1) designated patient supporter assigned for the duration of their hospitalization.**

- *There may only be one (1) designated patient supporter in Swedish facilities per patient stay. This person must be the same person for the entirety of the patient stay. It is not permitted to rotate patient supporters at this time.*
- *Patient supporters are not allowed to wait inside (e.g. congregate in lobby).*
 - *Persons found to be congregating inside will be asked to leave the facility or wait outside.*
- **All Swedish ICU/IMCU will only be accepting designated patient supporters by appointment.**
- *COVID-19 vaccination status for visitors/support individuals does not change exception criteria. Visitor restrictions will be followed regardless of vaccine status.*

A designated patient supporter is a person whose purpose is to aid in a patient’s recovery and healing. This may be a friend or relative. Patients need to ensure that their designated supporter is informed of the current restrictions and will be the only person visiting for the duration of their hospital stay. Patient supporters **for COVID-19 patients are not allowed unless approved on limited case-by-case basis only. Refer to the COVID-19 visitation specific guidelines below.**

Please be aware that any close contact could spread COVID to your loved one- even before you feel sick. We are happy you are here to support your loved one but please do not hug, kiss or share food/drink as this could be very dangerous and even deadly to the person you are here to support.

Patient supporters planning to visit patients in the ICU/IMCU (Intensive Care Units), must call in advance to arrange a time that is approved by the care team.

We continue to permit **essential** patient supporters needed for escort assistance for mobility, interpretation (until an interpreter can be assigned for medical advice), or medical decision-making support provided they pass entry control point screening.

COVID-19 vaccination is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED for all visitors entering this facility

*Our Emergency Departments, Women's and Children's, SMC Clinics, Imaging, Radiology, Lab, Surgical Services, and SMG/Ambulatory areas have set specific restrictions for limiting patient supporters that can be referenced in this document; patient supporters may not always be allowed. Refer to area specific guidelines below. *

All Designated Patient Supporters:

1. COVID-19 vaccination is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED for all visitors entering this facility
2. Must enter through each campus' Entry Control Points
3. Must be at least 18 years of age (no underage siblings) (See exceptions in "[Additional Guidelines and Restrictive Criteria Beyond In-Patient Areas](#)" section.)
4. Must be screened, be free of any COVID-19 symptom(s) within the last 24 hours, and must be afebrile, with no known exposures to COVID-19 in the past 14 days.
5. Must wear an isolation mask and follow physical distancing protocols at all times while in the facility. Wearing personal masks are encouraged, however **N95 with a valve, scarves, bandanas, and neck gaiters are not permitted**. Anyone wearing prohibited masks will be asked to remove them and replace with a provided medical mask. Medical masks will be provided if personal masks are unavailable. For visitors unable to wear a face mask, face shields will be provided and required to be worn in place of a mask.
 - a. Designated patient supporters who are not compliant with masking, may be asked to leave the facility at any time.
6. Must practice hand hygiene with provided hand sanitizer. Anyone wearing medical gloves at entries must remove the gloves, keep them off while inside the facility, and practice hand hygiene.
7. Must practice physical distancing of at least 6 feet, from patients, caregivers, and other visitors.
 - a. When in small spaces or where there is increased occupancy for a short period of time and 6 foot spacing cannot be maintained between individuals (e.g. Elevator), all individuals must be masked.

8. Although discouraged, food and drink are permitted to be brought inside patient rooms. Visitors may eat in patient rooms in the case they are staying for longer periods of time. ***If visitors are eating in the room, they must stop and mask whenever a caregiver enters the room.*** If visitors are eating, they should also be physically distanced from the patient. Visitors should always wear a mask at all other times and practice hand hygiene before and after eating.
 - a. Patient supporters may order food from nutrition services to be sent to patient room.
9. Upon entry, must go directly to-and-from the patient's location and are not permitted to wait or lounge in other areas (i.e.: hallways). If necessary, and at the unit's discretion, patient supporter may leave the unit and premises, and are permitted to return on the same day for additional visits.
10. Must use designated public restrooms on the unit and may **not** use patient restrooms.
11. Must leave and exit the premises at the request of the direct care nurse or nurse manager.
12. Must only visit during campus visiting hours
13. Overnight stays are restricted and only permitted if coordinated with direct care nurse or nurse manager. Shared patient rooms are excluded.
14. Designated supporters of patients undergoing aerosol generating procedures may be asked to leave or don additional PPE during the procedure.

Please be aware that any close contact could spread COVID to your loved one- even before you feel sick. We are happy you are here to support your loved one but please do not hug, kiss, or share food/drink as this could be very dangerous and even deadly to the person you are here to support.

Things to Note and Instructions for Regulating Patient Support Visits:

1. **Each patient may have one (1) designated patient supporter during their hospitalization.** This person must be the same designated support person for the duration of the patient stay.
2. Visitors will not be permitted to wait in waiting room or lobby areas.
3. The direct care nurse or nurse manager will be responsible for limiting one (1) support person in order to provide the best care and ensure physical distancing. Additional individuals will be asked to leave.
4. Shared patient rooms will be monitored by the direct care nurse or nurse manager to ensure proper physical distancing is achievable; patient supporters may be asked to leave. Curtains must be drawn, and masks worn.
5. For hospitalized patients recovering from COVID-19 or PUIs, support visits are not allowed aside from limited approved exceptions (see details in COVID-19 Visitation Guidelines section below).
6. **For non-COVID patients who are *end of life*, two (2) designated patient supporters at a time** (no set maximum but must rotate out/only 2 at a time) are allowed.
7. See COVID-19 Visitation guidelines below for end-of life visitation in this population. Entry Control Points will **not** be responsible for regulating visits but will inform arriving patient supporters of the guidelines and will always use their best judgment. Units, caregivers, and leaders will need to partner to uphold these guidelines.

COVID-19 Visitation Guidelines

1. **For hospitalized patients diagnosed with COVID-19 or PUIs (patients under investigation), visitation is restricted.**

2. Visitation for the designated one (1) patient supporter will only be approved on a case-by-case basis by the direct care nurse, nurse manager, or senior campus administrator. The designation of the patient supporter will be identified by the patient or the patient's surrogate decision-maker. Examples of situations for consideration include end of life, prolonged hospitalizations, or other extenuating circumstances.
3. If a patient supporter is approved, an appointment for visits will need to be arranged by the supporter by calling the nursing unit and coordinating a time. During the call, the supporter will be asked to describe to the staff why the patient is hospitalized. If they are unable to demonstrate an awareness of COVID-19, they will not be allowed visitation (the exception to this is if the supporter is the surrogate decision maker and the patient is unable to provide disclosure).
4. If visitation is permitted, upon arrival on the unit, the staff will provide instruction/assistance to the support person regarding donning and doffing of PPE. The informed consent language regarding risk of visitation will be provided in writing and these steps will be documented by the RN in EPIC.
 - a. See [Management of Visitors to COVID-19 Patients](#)
 - b. See [Disclaimer for COVID-19 Visits](#)
 - c. Support individuals should avoid being in room during aerosol generating procedures.
 - d. Support individuals should be educated on proper PPE usage and the risks associated with visitation, as well as be educated on COVID-19 symptom monitoring for 14 days post visit
5. Entry into the patient's room is at the discretion of the direct care nurse and nurse manager, and subject to the availability and use of appropriate personal protective equipment. Entry control points should always attempt to coordinate directly with the direct care nurse and nurse manager for this population.
6. End of life COVID-19 patients may have two (2) designated patient supporters. End of life circumstances may be considered on a case by case basis and must be highly coordinated with direct care nurse **and** campus leadership to ensure safety can be achieved.
 - a. Refer to Aerosol Contact Precautions for COVID-19 policy for questions about preparation of the body for religious ceremonies.

*Additional Guidelines and Restrictive Criteria Beyond In-Patient Areas

The following is in response to the ability to regulate safe physical distancing and exposure.

Emergency Department Guidelines:

1. At the discretion of the ED team: ED patients will be allowed one (1) designated patient supporter per visit for non-COVID-19 patients/PUI. End of life exceptions allowed.
2. Pediatric patients under the age of 18 may have two (2) parents or guardians, but no additional people.
3. Patient supporters are **not allowed** for patients presenting with COVID-19 symptoms (PUI) and are **not allowed** for known COVID-19 positive patients.

4. Patient supporters must be screened, be free of any COVID-19 symptom(s) within the last 24 hours and must be afebrile.
5. Patient supporters must wear an isolation mask, practice hand hygiene, and follow physical distancing while in the care facility.
6. No minors will be allowed to accompany (unless no alternate care options exist).
7. No high-risk (immunocompromised, elderly, pregnant) patient supporters will be allowed.
8. Patient supporter must go directly to, and stay in, the patient's location; if Supporter leaves the room, they must leave the ED (with possible bathroom exceptions).
9. Patient supporters or others are **not allowed** to wait in the waiting room; must exit and wait elsewhere.

Women's and Children's General Guidelines/Exceptions:

1. All support persons must be at least 18 years of age. Exception: either parent of a baby or child may be present, regardless of age.
2. If an urgent situation occurs and a patient has minor children accompanying them with no other option for care at the time of the emergent situation, the minors may accompany the patient until other arrangements can be made.
3. Support persons should always remain in the room with the patient. If there are essential activities to be attended to, at the discretion of the unit, the support person may leave and return.
4. Patient supporters must wear a mask, practice hand hygiene, and follow physical distancing while in the facility. Patient supporters will be screened for covid-19 symptoms during bedside shift report and reminded to inform caregivers if symptoms develop.
5. Official interpreters may be present if needed by the patient.
6. Support persons may eat in patient rooms, however, should stop eating and replace mask when staff enters.
7. A trained Bereavement Doula is part of the Swedish Perinatal Care team, thus not a visitor, who can support the patient throughout the entire hospital stay in any location.

Pediatrics

1. All minor patients (18 years or younger) in inpatient areas (including NICU) may have two (2) people present (parent, or guardian). For NICU, both support persons must be banded.
2. COVID+ pediatric patients may have one asymptomatic parent/guardian/designee.

Labor and Delivery - Any support person present must stay in the room, always remaining masked. No eating is permitted in the patient room when staff or providers are present.

Non-Covid

1. Laboring patients may have two (2) designated support persons who may be a doula, partner, friend, or family member. The designated support persons may leave the unit and return once daily. Multiple people will not be able to rotate.
2. Only one support person plus a doula will be allowed in the in the OB Triage/OB ED, the operating room for a C-Section and in pre-op and post-op.
3. Doulas may leave the labor room and return for essential activities if necessary.

Covid-positive or Persons Under Investigation for Covid (PUI)

1. Laboring patients may have one (1) support person present during labor and delivery. No support persons will be allowed in the C-Section room
2. One (1) support person is allowed in OB triage/OB ED, pre-op and post-op.

Post-Partum - Any support person present must stay in the room, always remaining masked. No eating is permitted in the patient room when staff or providers are present.

Non-COVID

1. Patients may have one (1) designated support person who will be allowed to stay with the patient (ideally, this one person would have the extra adult band).

Covid-positive or Persons Under Investigation for Covid (PUI)

1. Patients may have one (1) support person. Must be same one (1) person for hospitalization. No eating is permitted in patient room when caregivers are present. Supporter must stay in the room and always remain masked while in the hospital.

Antepartum - Any support person present must stay in the room, always remaining masked. No eating is permitted in the patient room when staff or providers are present.

Non-Covid

1. Antepartum patients may have one (1) designated support person/partner stay with them at any time during the day. One support person may stay overnight. Only one (1) person may be selected as the designated support person/partner for the entire hospital stay.

Covid-positive or Persons Under Investigation for Covid (PUI)

1. Patients may have one (1) support person. This must be same person for the entire hospitalization.

W&C Outpatient & Testing

1. All pregnant patients having an appointment related to their pregnancy, (including an ultrasound or other testing regardless of location or inpatient/outpatient status), will be permitted one (1) support person to accompany them.
2. Approved support person must be 18 years of age or older, unless the chosen support person is the other parent of the child, in that case they can be any age. No other minors are allowed, unless the situation is emergent and there is no other option for the minors who have accompanied the patient.
3. Essential patient supporters/escorts needed for escort assistance for mobility, interpretation (until interpreter can be assigned for medical advice). Escorts will need to leave premises immediately after delivering patient to destination. No other patient supporter is permitted at this time and must exit the facility and wait elsewhere.
4. Pediatrics may have two (2) people present (advocate, parent, or guardian)
5. Pediatric patients having outpatient surgery will be allowed two (2) persons present (advocate, parent, or guardian).

Behavioral Health In-Patient Units:

1. Behavioral Health In-Patient Units will not permit Patient Supporters at this time.

Surgical and Procedural Patient Guidelines:

1. Only **essential** patient supporters needed for escort assistance for mobility, interpretation, emotional, or medical decision-making support are allowed to escort a patient. No visitors or additional escorts are allowed except for pediatric patients.
2. An essential supporter is allowed to escort a patient to the appointment check-in, and then must leave immediately. Essential patient supporters cannot accompany the patient during the appointment and cannot wait inside the hospital. Patient Supporters will need to coordinate pick-up prior to discharge.
3. Essential patient supporters will be allowed in pre-op and Phase 2 PACU for discharge instructions. Supporters are not allowed in PACU 1. Supporters must exit the facility, waiting elsewhere while patient is in surgery.
 - a. Patient supporters should always be accessible by phone and have cell signal.
4. Patients are restricted to **(1) one supporter per patient**. Due to department size, First Hill Main Pre-Op B pod will only allow a total of **two (2) patient supporters in the department at a time**. (Two supporters total in the department, not two supporters per patient), patient supporter visitation is limited to 15 minutes in order to allow supporters to rotate through.
5. Pediatric patients are always allowed two (2) patient supporters, (parent or guardian) to escort. Only asymptomatic parents or guardians are allowed. If there is not an asymptomatic parent or guardian available, the case will be delayed. Parent or guardian of pediatric patients are permitted to wait in the surgical waiting areas and follow physical distancing standards.

6. No visitors are allowed at this time for any patients in the outpatient care areas; patient supporters will need to coordinate pick-up prior to discharge.
7. Waiting for all short-term care and outpatient cases should be outside the facility. Patient supporters should always be accessible by phone and have cell signal.
8. Patient supporters must be screened, be free of any COVID-19 symptom(s) within the last 24 hours and must be afebrile.
9. Patient supporters must wear an isolation mask, practice hand hygiene, and follow physical distancing while in the care facility.

SMC Clinics, SMG Clinics, Laboratory, Breast Imaging, and Radiology Guidelines:

1. One (1) patient supporter is permitted to accompany patients for outpatient visits in SMC and SMG clinics. This will not apply to Lab, Breast Imaging and Radiology due to space constraints and support persons are not able to stay with the patient as they are in clinics.
2. Support person must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and be asymptomatic in order to accompany the patient. Patient Supporters must wear an isolation mask, practice hand hygiene, and follow physical distancing while in the care facility.
3. Pregnant patients having an ultrasound or other pregnancy related appointment will be permitted one (1) support person to accompany them regardless of location or inpatient, outpatient status. The support person must be 18 years of age or older, unless the chosen support person is the other parent of the child, in that case they can be any age. No other minors are allowed, unless the situation is emergent and there is no other option for the minors who have accompanied the patient. Support person must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and be asymptomatic in order to accompany the patient.
4. Pediatrics may have two (2) people present (advocate, parent or legal guardian)
5. Siblings of pediatric patients remain restricted unless they have an appointment. If parents have limited resources/options for care of siblings, they may work with the provider/clinic to determine if an exception may be granted. Patient supporters must be screened, be free of any COVID-19 symptom(s) within the last 24 hours and must be afebrile.
6. For the Laboratory, Breast Imaging, and Radiology - No patient supporters are permitted to accompany patients unless there is need for escort assistance essential for mobility, interpretation, emotional, or medical decision-making support. No other patient supporter is permitted at this time and may wait in their car.

This guidance cannot anticipate every situation. Campus leadership may make exceptions to it based on the realities of a given situation, using their best judgment to protect patients and caregivers, acting out of love and compassion for those involved.

Screening Requirements Prior to Entry:

All people are required to follow universal masking, hand hygiene, and physical distancing. All people are required to follow the screening process, which is subject to change. All people are required to attest they are free of COVID-19 symptoms in the last 24 hours and have no known recent exposure to COVID-19 in the last 14 days (symptoms subject to change).

- Fever over 100°
- Chills
- New cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- Muscle or body aches (myalgia)
- Fatigue/feeling ill/malaise
- New loss of smell or taste
- New or unusual congestion/runny nose
- Nausea/diarrhea/vomiting
- New or unusual headache