

Public Health measures remain in Nova Scotia Health facilities

Monday, March 21, 2022 - 09:48AM

As Nova Scotia enters phase three of its reopening plan today, March 21, Nova Scotia Health would like to remind the public about what to expect in our facilities, where public health measures remain in place to protect the health and safety of our patients and staff.

Entering Nova Scotia Health facilities

All patients, support people and visitors will be required to answer COVID-19 screening questions when entering our facilities. All patients admitted to Nova Scotia Health facilities who have not had a documented COVID-19 infection in the last 90 days will be tested for COVID-19 upon admission.

Support people and visitors will be required to wear a mask while indoors. When possible and appropriate, patients coming to hospital for cancer care, emergency, or ambulatory care clinics, appointments or procedures will also be required to wear a mask. Inpatients are not required to wear a mask.

Please do not visit the hospital if you are feeling unwell. As an added precaution, we encourage you to do a COVID-19 rapid test prior to visiting. We ask that anyone entering our facilities also wash or sanitize their hands regularly and maintain social distancing where possible.

Proof of vaccination

Support people/visitors will be required to show proof of vaccination when entering our facilities. Exceptions may be made for compassionate reasons such as emergency situations and end-of-life care in discussion with the care team. In these circumstances, support people will be required to follow additional infection prevention and control measures to ensure the health and safety of our patients and our teams. Proof of vaccination is not required for those seeking or receiving care or treatment.

Nova Scotia Health team members

All Nova Scotia Health team members in clinical settings are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE), so the public can expect to see physicians and staff wearing masks and full-face shields or goggles during assessment or treatment.

Isolation for health care workers exposed to COVID-19 remains in place. If there is a positive case in their household, health care workers must self-isolate for a minimum of 72 hours and test as required. This means we may have physicians and staff unable to work for 72 hours, which could impact services.

Reintroduction of services

Earlier this year, it was necessary to temporarily halt many scheduled surgeries, particularly those requiring hospital stays. This allowed us to free up beds and staffing resources to respond to the Omicron wave of the pandemic and other demands. We are gradually resuming surgical services that had been temporarily reduced, however we remain limited in the number of types of surgeries we can complete, with cases requiring hospital stays most impacted.

We recognize the impact these disruptions can have on patients and their families and continue to routinely reassess this situation, on a facility-by-facility basis, to allow as many surgeries as possible to proceed. Where required, patients will be contacted directly to reschedule procedures or appointments.

Visitor restrictions

Support people/family caregivers are permitted for patients in the following situations:

Three designated support people at a time for:

- palliative care and other patients nearing end of life*
- patients receiving medical assistance in dying*

Two designated support people at a time for:

- children and youth under 19 admitted to hospital**
- patients in intensive care units and critically ill patients in emergency departments**
- labour and birth**

One designated support person at a time for:

- children and youth under 19 in outpatient settings
- hospital inpatients***
- patients in emergency departments
- prenatal visits, including ultrasounds
- ambulatory care clinics, appointments or procedures

*Palliative patients and others nearing end of life may identify a maximum of five designated support people. Three of these five designated support people may visit each day and can visit at the same time where space permits.

**Children, patients in ICU, and critically ill patients in emergency departments and patients in labour and giving birth may identify up to three support people; only two will be permitted to visit at a time.

***Please note, hospital inpatients are asked to identify three support people per week. These three designated support people may visit each day, but only one will be permitted to visit at a time.

Please note, visitor restrictions may differ between sites based on outbreaks and staffing levels.

Nova Scotia Health will continue to monitor the epidemiology, hospitalizations, employee absences and COVID-19 activity within our facilities to determine if and when these measures can be altered. In the meantime, we ask for the public's patience and cooperation as we learn to live with COVID-19. We thank everyone for supporting safe and healthy spaces for all.