

Ministry of Health

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March 19, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: All Public and Private Hospitals

FROM: Dr. David Williams
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Ministry of Health

SUBJECT: **COVID-19 Updates: Visitors at Acute Care Settings**

The Ministry of Health (“ministry”) continues to coordinate the response to COVID-19 and to keep the sector updated as relevant recommendations and plans arise from these discussions.

As the situation in Ontario evolves, the ministry continues to be committed to maintaining the safety of vulnerable patients in acute care settings. In order to ensure a safe and secure environment for patients and staff, we strongly recommend that these settings only allow essential visitors until further notice. We will reevaluate this measure in the coming weeks and ensure consistency with my recent guidance on enhanced public health measures.

The ministry is identifying essential visitors as those who have a patient who is dying or very ill or a parent/guardian of an ill child or youth, a visitor of a patient undergoing surgery or a woman giving birth. These visitors must continue to be actively screened into these settings. Screening questions should include asking visitors about their symptoms, recent travel history outside of Canada, and close contact with a case of COVID-19 or close contact with a person with acute respiratory distress who has recently travelled outside of Canada. Further resources to assist in screening are available at the [Ministry of Health website](#). Those who fail screening will not be permitted to enter. No other visitors should be permitted to enter these premises, instead they should be asked to keep in touch with loved ones by phone or other technologies, as available.

The safety and well-being of our patients and staff is our top priority. We will continue to monitor this situation closely and provide further guidance or direction where needed.

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours truly,

Original signed by

David Williams, MD, MHSc, FRCPS
Chief Medical Officer of Health