



## Caregiver Presence Guidelines

[Updated January 11, 2022 and subject to change.]

The Alexandra Marine and General Hospital's (AMGH's) top priority is keeping our patients, families, caregivers, staff and physicians safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To continue to provide the safest possible experience and to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, **effective January 11, 2022** AMGH will be pausing all non-essential visitors due to the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patients are asked to identify their essential caregivers at registration or on admission. The care team will determine those caregivers who are "essential" to provide care, keep patients safe and for compassionate reasons (see table below for more information). All caregivers will be required to show government issued photo identification and proof of full COVID-19 vaccination before entering AMGH. Acceptable proof of vaccination is the Ontario Ministry of Health Vaccination Receipt (digital or a paper copy) or the Ontario Enhanced Vaccine Certificate.

**\* Full vaccination is achieved 14 days after last dose in a COVID-19 vaccination series\***

If you do not have a computer or printer, you can call the **Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at [1-833-943-3900](tel:1-833-943-3900) to request a copy by mail**. You can also contact your local library to use computer and internet resources or ask a trusted friend or organization to help print a copy.

Regardless of immunization status, all individuals entering the hospital are required to undergo screening for COVID-19 prior to accessing the facility.

**Essential Caregivers should NOT** come to the hospital if they:

- o Are feeling unwell
- o Have tested positive for COVID-19
- o Have been tested for COVID-19 with results pending (or unresolved)
- o Have had close contact with a confirmed or suspect case of COVID-19

Essential caregivers must follow appropriate infection prevention and control guidelines at all times while at the hospital. Surgical grade facemasks are mandatory and provided by the hospital for the duration of time spent at the hospital.

### ***Definitions:***

***Essential Caregiver:*** An individual whose presence has been deemed important for the safety and well-being of a patient and/or a patient who would otherwise be at risk if the essential caregiver were not present. (i.e. pediatric patients, palliative or actively dying patients, patients with cognitive or physical impairment).

*Those whose visit is necessary.*

**Family:** *as identified by the patient. A person who is a spouse/domestic partner, family member, sibling, parent, grandparent, neighbour and/or friend. Those whose visit is preferred by the patient and/or substitute decision-maker.*

**General Visitor:** *An individual who has not been identified as an essential caregiver, but still wishes to visit a patient. Those whose visits are exclusively social*

### What do I do before I visit the hospital?

- **All essential caregivers must be approved by the patients care team prior to entering the hospital.** All requests for approval should be made to the care team responsible for the appointment or admission.
- **Self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19.** Please self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19. If you fail screening, avoid coming to the hospital unless specifically directed by your care team.
- **Proof of vaccination and identification.** Be ready with your proof of COVID vaccination (14 days after your second dose) with photo identification. To protect patients, staff, and visitors it is preferred that everyone be vaccinated, however there are exceptions. Ask the care team before coming to visit.
- **Arrival timing.** Please prepare to **arrive 10 minutes before a visit/appointment** in order to be screened.

### What do I do when I get to the hospital?

- You will be required to go through **entrance screening** upon arrival into the hospital. You will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19, recent travel outside of Canada, and close contact with people who have COVID-19. It is important that you **answer all screening questions honestly** for the safety of yourself and others. You will be asked to show proof of vaccination and photo identification.
- **Clean your hands (Remove Gloves).** Please clean your hands using the **hand sanitizer provided**. If you are wearing gloves, you will be asked to remove them in order to clean your hands properly.
- **Put on a mask.** Everyone entering AMGH **must** wear a mask at all times. \* You will be given a mask by screening. Your mask should be fully covering your nose, mouth and chin at all times. Try to avoid adjusting your mask or touching your face while you are wearing your mask. Always wash your hands before and after putting on or taking off your mask. **Leave your mask on until you are outside of the hospital or back home.**

### What should I do in the hospital?

- **Proceed directly to a patient's room or appointment.** You will need to go directly to your appointment or stay with the patient while you are inside AMGH. You may be directed to stay in a designated waiting area if you need to be separated during tests or treatments. We kindly ask that you not walk around the hospital.

- **Practice physical distancing.** Follow directions from staff, wall signage and floor markers throughout the hospital. Pay close attention to some public spaces where physical distancing measures have been put in place such as only 2 people to an elevator and designated entrances/exits to use.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why is AMGH limiting family and general visitors?

We understand that limits to visitation are difficult for patients and families. Our top priority is keeping our staff and most vulnerable patients safe. High volumes and tight space make social distancing very difficult. To provide as much patient care as we can, we must limit the number of people in our hospitals to those who need to be here the most.

### What are other hospitals doing?

AMGH worked with hospitals within our regional and patient/family advisors in the review/revision of this policy.

### What if my situation changes?

Patient care needs may change during their stay at AMGH. Therefore, so can the need for caregiver support, changing visitors from 'essential'/'nonessential' and you should talk to your care team.

**Can I visit if I have a negative COVID test?** At this time, AMGH is not considering testing in application of its visitor policy.

### What evidence of vaccination will you accept?

- Printed or electronic COVID Enhanced Certificate QR Code with photo ID <https://covid19.ontariohealth.ca/>
- Printed or electronic COVID vaccine certificate with photo ID \*care partners under the age of 18 can show non-photo ID

### What is meant by 'full vaccination'?

Essential Caregivers are only considered fully vaccinated if they have provided proof of having received 2 doses of an approved vaccine more than 14 days prior to the visit.

### Why do essential caregivers require vaccination if all staff are already vaccinated?

Ensuring essential caregivers are vaccinated limits patients, staff, and visitor exposure to unvaccinated individuals to only exceptional circumstances. Vaccination is the best option to prevent serious illness and death from COVID-19. There are unique clinical situations in which an exemption would permit the patient to be supported by non-vaccinated Family and/or essential caregiver, however we ask that whenever possible only fully vaccinated caregivers are designated as essential caregivers while in hospital.

## Can I change my essential caregiver?

In an attempt to limit the number of individuals a patient is exposed to, we are discouraging changing care givers. There are exceptional circumstances where this might be required and will require approval from your care team.

Definitions (for the purpose of these guidelines)	
<b>Full Vaccination</b>	14 days after last dose given in a COVID-19 vaccination series.
<b>Essential Caregiver</b>	Is a family member, guardian, support worker, friend and/or neighbour who provides necessary support, assistance and/or care for a patient in need in any capacity or length of time.
<b>Palliative Patient</b>	Is a patient with a life threatening diagnosis who is receiving specialized medical care that focuses on providing relief from pain and other symptoms.

**Note: individuals who do not meet the definition of Essential Caregiver may not visit an in-patient at this time.**

### Department Specific Guidelines

**In-patients:** AMGH supports one fully vaccinated essential caregiver if deemed necessary by the patients care team.

- **Patients in Isolation (Droplet or Airborne)**  
Essential Caregivers will not be permitted until isolation precautions have been cleared regardless of vaccination status.

### **Compassionate Presence:**

- **Palliative Patient Imminently Approaching End-of-Life Care**  
Family / caregiver presence will be determined with the care team and based on healthcare provider's assessment, which may include use of palliative assessment scales including Palliative Performance Scale (PPS), which is a validated and reliable tool used by healthcare providers to determine the gradual progression toward end of life.

When physical distancing can be maintained, AMGH supports up to two fully vaccinated family / caregiver(s) to be present 24/7; as approved by the unit where the patient is receiving care in consultation with Infection Prevention and Control and family/caregiver(s).

- **Patients receiving Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)**  
When physical distancing can be maintained, AMGH supports up to two fully vaccinated family / caregiver(s) to be present, as approved by the care team, where the patient is receiving care in consultation with Infection Prevention and Control and family/caregiver(s).  
\*AMGH supports the presence of children accompanied by a fully immunized adult. Proof of vaccine will not be required for children not eligible for vaccine.

**Please note: A unit in COVID-19 outbreak requires additional safety precautions to be in place as directed by Public Health, which could result in the hospital limiting family/caregiver presence.**

**Emergency Department:** AMGH supports one fully vaccinated essential caregiver to accompany patient.

**Community Outpatient Clinic Appointments:** AMGH supports one fully vaccinated essential caregiver to accompany patient.

**Note:** If the department is unable to maintain physical distancing, the family / caregiver may be required to wait outside the treatment area while the patient receives care.

The following is a list of Clinical Exceptions that would permit patient support by non-vaccinated Family and Caregiver(s).

**Note:** AMGH may allow unvaccinated visitors with the arrangements of additional precautions. Unvaccinated visitors must be deemed essential by the patients care team.

Reason for family/caregiver presence	Examples of Clinical Exceptions that would permit patient support by Non-vaccinated Family and Caregiver(s)
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Children or infants (whether COVID-19 positive or not)</b></li> <li>b) <b>Mental Health Crisis</b> – patients who are experiencing a mental health crisis that the care team believes could be improved by having family /caregiver presence may be permitted</li> <li>c) <b>Cognitive Impairment</b> – patients with dementia, delirium, or cognitive decline and who require family caregiver to assist in wayfinding, retaining information, and following instructions - (as per Accessibility for Ontarians with a Disability – AODA)</li> </ul>
Enabling Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Laboring mothers</b> – support persons play a role as family/caregiver following delivery</li> <li>b) <b>Critical conversations</b> – patients for whom the team determines important care conversations would be better understood or explained in person</li> <li>c) <b>Training to enable discharge</b> – when family/caregivers require training on how to use medical equipment that will be used in the home to support recovery</li> <li>d) <b>Patients with Development or Intellectual Disability</b> that requires support</li> <li>e) <b>Interpretation/Translation</b> –A family / caregiver may be permitted for patients who do not speak English when the team determines their presence may assist with care (e.g., during imaging to explain repositioning to the patient)</li> </ul>
Compassionate Grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Palliative / MAID (imminently approaching end of life)</b> with the exception of COVID-19 positive patients</li> <li>b) <b>Critical life-altering conversation</b></li> </ul>

**Note:** The Manager or delegate of the unit or department where the patient is receiving care will review all clinical exceptions in consultation with the Infection Prevention and Control Team and the family / caregiver.

**In Common Areas or When Leaving the Hospital**

Please do not linger in hallways or spend extended time in public areas such as, lobbies, and waiting areas.

## Food and Personal Items for Patients

- Family/Caregivers may not bring food or beverages for personal consumption into a patient room or in patient care areas. Meals, snacks and beverages are available in designated areas.
- If family/caregiver bring food for their loved one, food containers must be disposed of or taken home with the family/caregiver when they leave.
- Flowers/plants are not permitted in patient rooms at this time.

To maintain Infection Prevention and Control standards and the safety of our staff and patients, please bring **only** the listed items below to the hospital for patients.

- glasses, hearing aids and dentures
- mobility items (canes, walkers, wheelchairs)
- **new** toiletries only
- **new** grooming items – toothbrushes, combs and hair brushes
- personal items- books, magazines, puzzle books, family photos etc.
- mobile phone/tablet,
- clean clothing and footwear

Please direct requests for special items to the Manager of the Unit where the patient is receiving care.

We thank you for your continued support with following these important guidelines and preventing the spread of COVID-19.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Manager where the patient is receiving care or the Clinical Services Office at (519) 524-8689 ext 5716.

***Please note these guidelines apply only to family and caregivers, not to patients. Please do not delay seeking medical care if needed.***