

Holiday FAQs on Family Presence during COVID-19 in Acute Care

Will the designated support and visitation guidance be relaxed during thanksgiving?

Given the current transmission rates in Alberta, the impact at our hospitals, and the need to ensure the safety of patients, families and staff, Alberta Health Services (AHS) is not able to accommodate additional designated support persons and/or visitors beyond what is outlined in the current guidance. Please see ahs.ca/visitation for more information.

How can I prepare for a safe thanksgiving visit?

It is crucial right now for everyone to assess their risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19 before entering any AHS facility. If you are a designated support person, or planning to visit a patient receiving end-of-life care or who is critically ill, we strongly recommend that you be fully vaccinated and please ensure you review and follow the direction in these pamphlets to reduce your risk:

[Know Your Risk](#)

[Know Your Role](#)

You must follow all noted requirements, including but not limited to health screening, continuous masking, and hand hygiene when coming to AHS facilities.

When is it best to be present at a facility?

Please discuss with the care team the schedule for the day to determine when it is the ideal time to support, and plan times that best meet the patient's needs. Consider moving as much as possible to virtual connections.

Can other family members come for a special thanksgiving visit?

Unfortunately, at this time, this is not possible. We encourage you to consider having a [virtual visit](#) instead. When a designated support is present with a patient, they may want to set-up a call to allow other family members to participate.

Can we rotate the designated support person over thanksgiving?

While in some cases changes in the designated support person are supported, it must be done through discussion with the care team. Reasons for change may include a change in the designated support person's health status, fatigue, or otherwise being unable to continue. The intention of a limited number of designated supports is to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, and rotating different people into this role increases the risk to everyone.

Can my loved one receive a pass to leave the facility over thanksgiving?

If a pass is essential to support care, the care team needs to weigh the risks with the patient before the decision is made.

Regrettably, passes will not be considered strictly for the purposes of social visitation over thanksgiving.

For more please visit: ahs.ca/visitation

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Can I bring in gifts, food and/or flowers for a patient and/or staff?

Designated support persons and approved visitors should check with the service area before bringing in gifts, food and/or flowers to confirm what is appropriate for the unit and how to bring items in safely. Delivery services cannot bring gifts, food and/or flowers to patients or drop them off at site entries.

Please speak to the healthcare team regarding a designated support person eating with a patient. At this time, food cannot be heated or refrigerated at sites.

If I can't come in person, what are my options? How can the site support connecting virtually?

If you cannot come to a healthcare site in person, or wish to limit time spent at AHS facilities to minimize risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19, please consider the use of technology to connect with patients. Telephone, text messaging, email, and virtual video apps are all great ways to spend time with your loved one.

If the patient does not have access to their own device, ask the care team about patient use of AHS tablets (available in some locations). [Review options](#) to connect virtually.

Can we visit outside?

For patients who are admitted, outdoor visitation can occur between the patient, their designated support person(s) and/or other visitors following specific requirements. Connect directly with the care team to discuss. Details can be found at ahs.ca/visitation.