

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Hospitals to manage visitor access

To protect vulnerable patients and staff, visiting hours and the number of visitors per patient, have been reduced at Nelson Marlborough Health hospitals.

Visiting hours at hospitals are now between 2.30pm to 8.30pm Monday to Sunday, effective immediately. Children under 15 are not permitted to visit. All external doors will be locked.

In addition to set visiting times, only two visitors per patient (restricted to family members or support people only) will be permitted. This will reduce the risk of exposure by limiting the number of friends and family members who attend with patients. Anyone collecting a patient is asked to wait outside the main entrance.

These restrictions are part of measures the hospitals are taking to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Lexie O'Shea, Incident Controller, Hospital Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) for COVID-19 says NMH is following the lead of the National Health Coordination Centre, and the review of visiting hours is consistent with the approach other DHBs are taking.

"The safety of our staff and our patients is our highest priority. We need to protect their wellbeing against the significant threat of COVID-19," she says. "One way we can do that is to manage the access the public has to our hospitals, especially people who may be visiting vulnerable patients."

She says although some areas of the hospitals had flexible visiting hours previously they will now be adhering to the set times.

She appreciates there may be exceptional circumstances for some people and these can be discussed with ward and medical staff.

"I encourage people with family and whanau in hospital to, where possible, keep in touch by text, face time, social media or phone calls rather than a face-to-face visit.

There will be a single point of entry at Nelson and Wairau Hospitals, with public access restricted to the main entrance door.

People will be asked screening questions when they enter. Visitors or patients with appointments, who are allowed to enter will be asked to sign in and give their contact details.

If anyone identifies as having been overseas in the last 14 days or having been in contact with a COVID positive patient or suspicion of COVID patient they will be refused entry.

“Our hospitals and healthcare systems have robust systems and procedures in place to stop the spread of COVID19. Please support our efforts and remember that people in hospital are vulnerable and we do not want to put them at risk,” Lexie says, “and if a visitor is asked to wear a mask we expect full compliance or they may be removed from the facility.

“I can’t stress enough the importance of physical distancing, washing and drying your hands, coughing or sneezing into your elbow and most importantly, staying home if you are sick.”

She says people should attend their scheduled appointments at the hospital unless they have been contacted and told otherwise, or if they have been out of the country or are unwell, in which case they should ring to re-schedule.

NMH will monitor and review the managed access measures as required.

To minimise the spread of COVID-19 the advice remains the same: stay home, physical distancing, cover coughs and sneezes, wash and dry your hands thoroughly especially after coughing or sneezing, and stay away from others if you are sick.

If you’re worried about your health or the health of someone else, call your GP or call Healthline on 0800 358 5453.

For more information on the latest Nelson Marlborough Health news please see: [www.nmdhb.govt.nz/covid-19](http://www.nmdhb.govt.nz/covid-19)

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