

MEDIA RELEASE

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Hospital visitor policy changes during Alert Level 3

The Nelson Marlborough Health Hospital Visitor Policy has been updated to respond to the greater risk posed by the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus.

Chief Executive Lexie O'Shea said reducing the number of people entering Nelson and Wairau hospital settings was key to keeping vulnerable patients and staff safe during Alert Level 3.

"Every time a person comes into our hospital environment they extend the reach of our bubble. While we have infection prevention measures in place such as mask wearing, screening questions and scanning-in, our safest measure is to remove as much of the risk as possible."

The changes to the policy in the inpatient setting see a reduction in visitor numbers per patient from three to one. To further reduce any potential exposure risk, this person can attend for one visit a day.

"We know with Delta that people are infectious earlier and spread infection more. So at Alert Level 3, any person in our community carries with them an element of risk. By reducing the number of people and the number of interactions, we reduce the risk to our patients and staff."

The policy also request those attending outpatient appointments to only bring a support person if required.

"We have a number of measures in place to keep our outpatient appointments as safe as possible including a mix of face-to-face and virtual clinics, spaced seating and mask-wearing. We are asking for support, from those who can, to reduce the number of people we accommodate at a time in these settings"

Being physically distant, doesn't mean socially distant. Whānau are encouraged to help loved ones become virtual-visitor savvy, with the use of personal devices such as smartphones to connect with family outside of the hospital setting.

"There are exceptions to the visitor policy, for example when someone is at the end-of-life or requiring additional support with physical or mental disability. If you think you meet this criteria please discuss this before visiting the hospital with the relevant charge nurse, charge midwife or duty nurse manager."

Things to know about visiting at Alert Level 3

At Alert Level 3 our hospitals are open but things may look a little different as we work to keep each other safe:

- It is a requirement for staff and patients to wear masks in healthcare settings.
- Record keeping is mandatory at healthcare facilities. Staff and patients need to sign-in or keep a record of their attendance.
- Hospital attendees will be asked COVID-19 screening questions prior to entry.

To minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission visitor restrictions are in place:

- In the inpatient setting (when people stay overnight) this means:
 - Visiting hours are strictly 2.30pm-8pm.

- One visitor from the same bubble may be nominated by the patient to visit.
- The nominated visitor may visit for one visit per day.
- Children under the age of 16 are restricted from visiting.
- Exceptions to the above (eg, compassionate grounds) require approval by the manager in charge. To request an exception, please phone the main line on 03 546 1800 and ask to be put through to the ward you want to visit.
- In the outpatient setting (where people attend an appointment) this means:
 - One support person may accompany the patient.
 - Exceptions to the above require approval by the manager in charge. To request an exception, please phone the main line on 03 546 1800 and ask to speak with the Charge Nurse Manager Outpatients.

Contact:

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