

Flu visitation restriction Q&A for Novant Health UVA Health System team members

Who does the flu visitation restriction apply to?

To protect the health of our patients, all Novant Health UVA Health System will limit visitation in all of our acute care facilities. This applies to any children who are visiting patients, including siblings, friends or family members. Children will also be restricted from attending classes in or touring the hospitals.

In addition to restricting visitors 12 and under, children of team members should not come to work with them at this time.

When will the visitation restrictions start?

This is effective Jan. 12 at 7 a.m. From that point until further notice, no visitors 12 and under will be allowed in our acute care facilities.

How long will the restrictions be in place?

We will reevaluate the restrictions on a regular basis as data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and our communities becomes available.

Why are restrictions in place?

We are taking this action both to protect our patients and to also reduce the likelihood that children who are visiting might encounter the flu.

A number of factors led us to decide to restrict visitors, including:

- Flu cases nationally and across the Novant Health UVA Health System footprint are on the rise with the CDC reporting that the 2017-18 flu season could be severe.
- Children and elderly are the most at risk for the flu.

Are there exceptions to the restrictions?

Yes, there are exceptions:

1. Emergency department patients who may need to bring their children with them.
2. End-of-life care patients.

Who can help facilitate exceptions to the visitor rule for end-of-life care patients?

Nursing units should work with guest services and public safety to make arrangements for children to visit.

Are we restricting the number of visitors?

Many of our NICUs and PICUs have already implemented visitor restrictions to two immediate family members as an extra measure to protect our young patients. Currently, these are the only areas where such restrictions are in place.

What is my role with the visitor restriction policy?

We need all Novant Health UVA Health System team members to help our visitors understand this change. While signage, fliers and guest services will help, visitors who arrive with children will need to be stopped by team members and informed about this change. Patients who arrive with children must be asked to contact another responsible adult to come and take the child, so that the patient can focus on receiving care. Patient care is not to be delayed due to this restriction.

What should I do if I see a child 12 or younger who is not a patient in one of our acute care facilities?

If you see someone arrive with a child in our hospital lobby, please ask him or her if the child is there for care. If the child is there for care, he or she should be welcomed to the facility and provided directions as usual. If he or she is there to visit a patient, he or she should be told:

“We appreciate you want to visit your (friend, relative, etc.), but due to the significant impact influenza is having in our community, this hospital is restricting visitors who are 12 and under. I am sorry for the inconvenience, but to protect our patients I need to request that you leave with the child. Perhaps you can call the patient or come back another time when you have someone who could watch your child?”

What happens if I contract the flu while caring for a patient? Will I receive an occurrence if I can't come to work as a result?

If a team member contracts the flu (regardless of the source), the regular attendance policy applies.

If you have questions, please contact your facility leader or a member of the guest services team.