Management of Visitors to Healthcare Facilities in the Context of COVID-19: Non-US Healthcare Settings
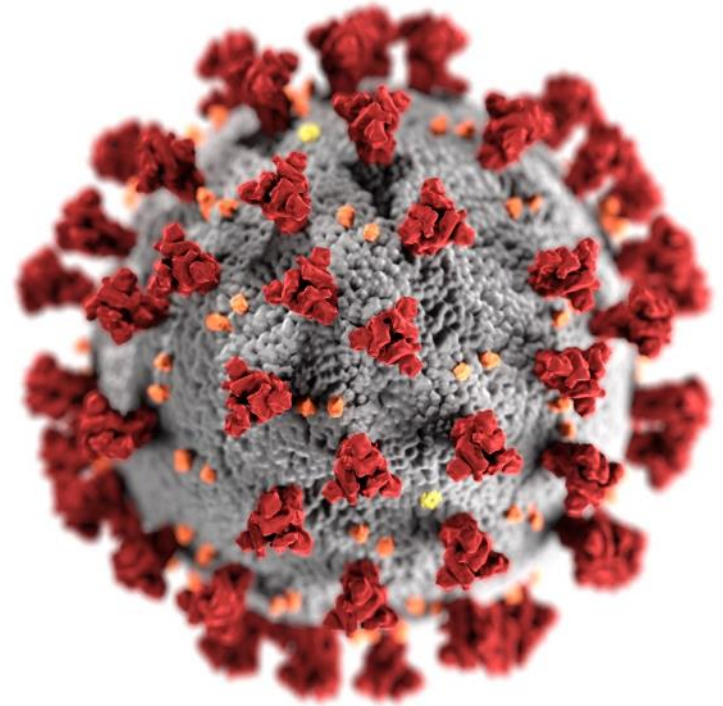
Document can be found at:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/non-us-settings/hcf-visitors.html

Outline

- COVID-19 background

- Importance of visitor management

- Limiting visitors to healthcare facilities

- Considerations during community transmission of COVID-19

- Visitor management when visiting patients with COVID-19 is essential

COVID-19 Background

- Caused by a newly emergent coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2

- Leads to respiratory tract infection, including pneumonia

- Transmitted mainly between people who are in close contact with one another via respiratory droplets (e.g., sneezing, coughing, or talking)

- Transmission via contaminated surfaces can also occur

- May be transmitted by individuals who are infected but have no symptoms

Importance of Visitor Management

- Healthcare facilities should minimize the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission to visitors of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

- The risk of visitors introducing SARS-CoV-2 into healthcare facilities increases as community transmission becomes widespread

- Facilities should establish policies and procedures for managing, screening, educating, and training all visitors

Limiting Visitors to Healthcare Facilities

Limit All Visitors During the COVID-19 Pandemic

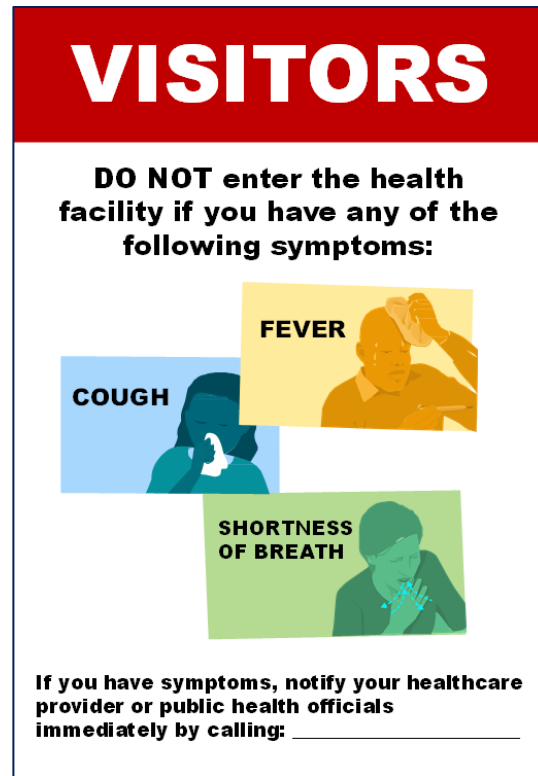**If visitors are allowed into the facility:**

- Instruct visitors with symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., fever, cough or shortness of breath) to leave the facility

- Encourage visitors to be aware of signs and symptoms of acute respiratory illness

- Follow national policies regarding the use of medical masks or face covers by healthy visitors*

*WHO advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID-19 is available here: https://www.who.int/publications_-detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak

Inform Visitors about Symptoms

- Place visual alerts at facility entrances and other strategic areas

- Signs should:
  - include signs and symptoms of COVID-19
  - instruct visitors not to enter the facility if they have respiratory symptoms
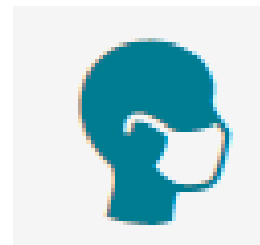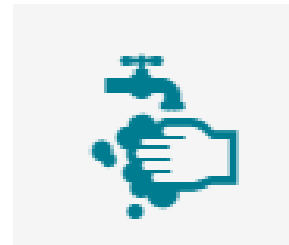 - instruct visitors whom to notify if they have respiratory symptoms

Restrict Visits to High-risk Patients

- Visitors **should not visit** patients who are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, such as:

  - older adults

  - people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility

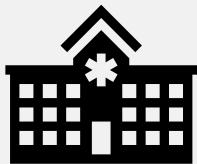 - people of any age with underlying medical conditions

Educate Visitors

- Educate all visitors who are allowed to visit and help care for patients on:

  - signs and symptoms of COVID-19, including instructions on whom to notify if they develop symptoms

  - appropriate hand hygiene practices

  - respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette

Use Administrative Controls

Facilities should:

Designate an entrance for visitors

Apply alternatives for direct interaction between visitors and patients

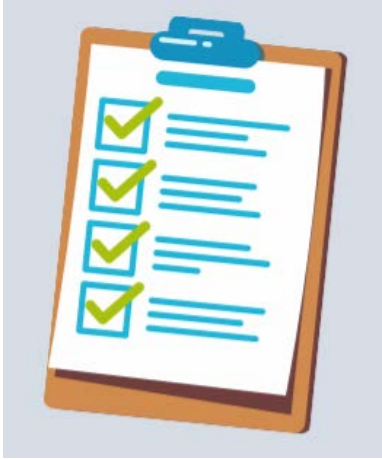- Example: telephone or internet connection for video or audio calls

Considerations during Community Transmission of COVID-19

Considerations during Community Transmission of COVID-19

- Community transmission is present when there are multiple people with confirmed COVID-19 infections that are not linked to transmission chains or other people with confirmed infections

- **Restrict** visitor access to healthcare facilities

- **Allow only visitors essential to providing patient care**

  - Essential visitors help provide patient care and/or care for pediatric patients

- Consider requiring all essential visitors to **wear a medical mask or face cover (e.g., homemade mask)**, according to national policies, to prevent anyone who is infected but does not have symptoms from spreading COVID-19 in the facility

Visitor Screening

- Establish thresholds to determine when active screening of all visitors will be initiated

- During active screening, assess all visitors before they enter the healthcare facility for symptoms of acute respiratory illness consistent with COVID-19

- If a visitor has symptoms, do <u>NOT</u> allow them to enter the facility

Managing Visitors who are Essential to the Care of Patients with COVID-19

Visitors Essential for the Care of Patients with COVID-19

- Schedule visits to allow enough time for screening, education, and training of visitors

- Assess visitors to determine risks to their health
  - Discourage visitors who are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g., older adults or those of any age with underlying medical conditions)

- Limit the number of essential visitors to one visitor per patient

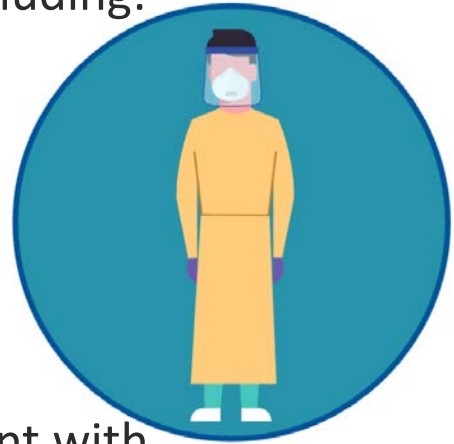# Educate and Limit the Movement of Essential Visitors

- Provide visitors with education on:
  - appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) use
  - hand hygiene
  - limiting surfaces touched
  - social distancing
  - restricted movement within the facility

- Visitors should only visit the patient they are caring for and avoid going to other locations in the facility

- Visitors should <u>NOT</u> be present during aerosol generating procedures or during collection of respiratory specimens

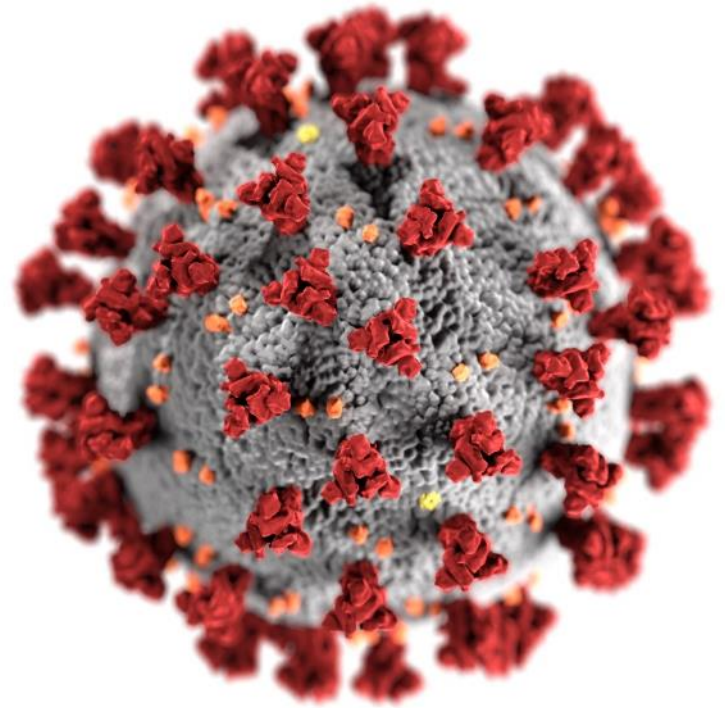# Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Visitors Essential for the Care of Patients with COVID-19

- Protects visitors from COVID-19
- Have a trained healthcare worker train visitors on PPE use, including:
  - correct donning and doffing of PPE
  - appropriate hand hygiene
  - appropriate disposal of PPE
- Ensure the availability of adequate supplies of PPE and hand hygiene stations
- Do not allow sharing of PPE among family members of a patient with COVID-19
- Follow PPE contingency plans if a visitor is essential and PPE is not available

Additional Considerations

- Ensure that essential visitors understand the potential risks associated with helping to provide care to patients with COVID-19, especially if visitors are:
  - at high risk for serious illness from COVID-19
  - primary caregivers and have extended contact with patients (e.g., parents or guardians of children)

- Active screening should be considered for essential visitors with potential exposure to SARS-CoV-2 due to a breach in infection prevention and control protocol

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348   www.cdc.gov

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.