



Visitor policies to reduce the spread of flu

This flu season, there are **two types of flu circulating in our area**: regular seasonal flu, and novel H1N1 influenza A, otherwise known as H1N1 or “swine” flu.

To reduce the spread of both types of flu in our community, all of the major health-related organizations in Washtenaw County have adopted the following guidelines. These will be in place until further notice.

- **No visitors with the flu:** People who are experiencing flu-like symptoms should not come to any health care facility for any reason, except to seek care. This includes not only patients' loved ones but those with business reasons for visiting these facilities. Flu-like symptoms are a fever over 100 degrees F, together with a cough, sore throat, or runny nose. Exceptions will be allowed only with the approval of the patient's care team.
- **Age limit on visitors:** No visitors under the age of 16 will be allowed to visit any hospitalized patient or patient in an Emergency Department, except in certain circumstances that must be cleared by the patient's care team. Visitors under the age of 16 are strongly discouraged in outpatient settings as well. This age group is most susceptible to the H1N1 flu virus, and high rates of illness are being seen in children and teens.
- **Limit on number of visitors:** No patient who has been admitted to any hospital or Emergency Department may have more than two visitors to their room at a time. Visitors should be limited to those who are essential to the emotional and physical support of the patient. Exceptions can be made by the patient's care team and should be approved in advance before visitors arrive at the hospital. Relatives, friends and colleagues of hospitalized patients are encouraged to call, send e-mail or mail, or send flowers or gifts instead of visiting.
- **Examples of situations that would warrant an exception to these rules:** If a person with flu-like symptoms or under the age of 16 is absolutely essential to support a patient, if a person under 16 is the parent of a patient, or if a patient is close to death. Visitors allowed under these exceptions will be asked to wear masks as appropriate.
- **All remaining visitors should:** clean their hands, cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or their sleeve, dispose of tissues properly, refrain from touching their faces, and wear masks and other protective gear when visiting someone who has been hospitalized for H1N1 flu.

Why we're doing this:

These rules are consistent with rules being put in place by other hospitals and health centers in our area and nationwide. Hospitals across the country are implementing new visitor guidelines to slow the spread of flu, which has become widespread in Michigan at a time when most people are not yet vaccinated against one or both types of flu virus.

Patients who are hospitalized or visiting the Emergency Department include many people who are much more likely than the general public to develop severe complications if they catch the flu.