



AAP: Limit visitors to hospitalized children during COVID-19 pandemic

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

Editor's note: This guidance was updated on Jan. 25, 2021. Please visit <https://bit.ly/35dxVh1>. For the latest news on COVID-19, visit <https://www.aapublications.org/news/2020/01/28/coronavirus>.

According to new interim guidance from the AAP, hospitals should support policies that allow one to two family members or caregivers to visit with pediatric inpatients and to require them to wear face coverings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"**Family Presence Policies for Pediatric Inpatient Settings During the COVID-19 Pandemic**" also addresses the importance of providing support to hospitalized children and families, even if it must be done virtually.

The AAP said it "recognizes the importance of providing the best medical care as well as providing compassionate patient- and family-centered care for children who are in the hospital and their families/caregivers while reducing infection risk and keeping clinicians/staff safe."

The AAP encourages hospitals to limit visits to one or two family members/caregivers. These visitors should be screened for fever and other COVID-19 symptoms and should not be allowed to visit if they are symptomatic or are positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Visitors should wear face coverings outside the patient's room and inside the patient's room when health care clinicians and other hospital personnel are present.

If a family member or caregiver is not allowed to visit due to being positive or symptomatic for SARS-CoV-2 virus, an alternative caregiver should be identified. If one is not available, families and hospitals should work together to discuss how best to support the child in the hospital or whether the situation warrants an exception to the family presence policy.

If the hospitalized child is symptomatic or positive for SARS-CoV-2, only one visitor should be allowed and hospitals should consider additional restrictions such as not allowing the visitor to leave the patient's room to visit other areas of the hospital, and having meals delivered directly to the patient's room. Visitors should be encouraged to wear face coverings.

The AAP noted some circumstances may call for an exception to visitor policies such as end-of-life-care and children with disabilities or medical complexity.

The guidance also suggests strategies hospitals can use to provide support to families. These include supporting virtual visits by the child's family and friends and virtual care planning sessions with family/caregivers. Children and their families should continue to receive psychosocial, emotional, spiritual and developmental support. Social workers also can continue to consult on topics such as food insecurity, and hospitals may consider connecting families to resources such as the child's primary care medical home and peer support organizations.

Resources

- [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services guidance on family presence policies for hospitals](#)
- [The Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care resources related to family presence in hospital settings, with a focus on promoting family-centered care](#)
- [Vital Talk communication tips and tools for clinicians](#)