



Caring for a person at the end of life in hospital during COVID-19

This factsheet is for anyone caring for a partner, relative, or friend with a serious illness and at the end of life in a hospital setting. It outlines some of the additional restrictions hospitals have in place during COVID-19.

What if my family member is admitted to hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sometimes people who have a serious illness and are at the end of life are admitted to hospital or a palliative care unit for symptom management, respite, or end of life care.

If your family member is admitted to hospital there will be some changes and restrictions in the visiting procedures and restrictions due to COVID-19. The hospital staff should tell you everything you need to know when your family member is admitted to hospital.



Some of the things you should expect are:

- On entering the hospital you will have your temperature taken to ensure you are well and it is safe for you to be around other people.



- The number of people allowed to visit your family member will be restricted. You may be asked to nominate three or four people who will be able to visit. There may be restrictions on how many people can visit at the same time.



- Young children may not be allowed to visit in order to protect the health of patients in the hospital. This is because young children cannot be relied on to practice safe hygiene and social distancing.

- You will be asked to wash your hands, or use hand sanitiser on coming into the hospital.



Some people may be concerned that they or their family member will be more at risk of getting COVID-19 in the hospital setting. Please be reassured that hospitals are taking precautions to ensure that they keep you and your family member safe and minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Strict hygiene practices are being enforced across the hospital.

What if my family member is admitted to hospital for end-of-life care and also has COVID-19?

If the person you are caring for has been diagnosed with COVID-19, family members will be advised to wear a mask with a face shield, gown, and gloves, and wash hands or use hand sanitiser before and after visits. There may also be restrictions on how long you can spend in the room with your family member.



If the person you have been caring for dies, there will be delays in returning their personal effects. This is to ensure that personal effects are clean and that there is no risk of passing the virus on to other people.

There will also be restrictions on the care of the body and funeral procedures to again reduce the risk of the virus being spread to others. These procedures are continually being updated so please ask your health care team any questions you may have.

Can I visit my family member in hospital if I have COVID-19?

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 you will not be able to visit the person in hospital until you are well and your doctor has given approval for you to come out of self-isolation.

If your family member is well enough you will be able to speak to them on the phone or see them using a video call. This may be very difficult for both you and your unwell family member.

You will most likely feel isolated during this time. Support from family and friends will be vital. How you maintain contact with family and friends will differ but telephone calls,

video calls and emails will be helpful. You may also find comfort in talking to one of several helplines. It is essential during this time that you reach out for help.

Caring for yourself during this time

Social distancing and the restrictions of visitors to the home makes it harder to get the social support that carers need. But it is important to care for yourself at this time. Ways that you might be able to do that are:



Telephone and video calls with family and friends.



Make sure your physical health is well managed by keeping your routine medical appointments. This could be done via telehealth.



Make a regular time to exercise – perhaps with a friend or family member – this may be a good way to maintain your social support.



Find some time at home to do the things you enjoy – this may be reading, knitting, cooking, or playing video games.

If you are struggling seek help from your GP, friends and family. The [CarerHelp factsheet Helplines for carers](#) will provide you with a telephone service that can provide the support you need at this time

It is important to remember to look after yourself. Our fact sheets [Caring for yourself at the bedside](#) and [Tips from carers](#) might be useful for you.

CarerHelp is here when you need it.
www.carerhelp.com.au