

Atrium Health Navicent Limits Visitors to Individuals Aged 12 and Older as Number of Respiratory Virus Cases Rise

Health system remains committed to proactively protecting central Georgians with safe visitation protocols

MACON, Ga., Nov. 15, 2022 – Out of concern for the health and wellbeing of the community, and due to the widespread prevalence of respiratory viruses such as RSV and flu, Atrium Health Navicent has chosen to modify certain portions of its visitation policy. We know how important it can be to have someone by your side when you seek medical care. The visitation policy is used to protect patients, visitors, and caregivers. These changes are effective Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022.

Visitors include those who are visiting/accompanying patients.

Guidelines

- Visitation hours will be held 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.
- General inpatient units system-wide may have four (4) visitors, daily. One (1) adult visitor/caregiver over the age of 18 years of age may stay with the patient from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. See special considerations for COVID patient visitation.
- Intensive Care units system-wide may have two (2) visitors/caregivers at the bedside at a time. One (1) visitor may stay overnight.
- Visitors under the age of 12 are not permitted, including for the birth of a sibling.
- Visitors must:
 - Wear a mask that always covers their nose and mouth.
 - Be screened at the front entrance of the hospital.
 - Be in good health (free of respiratory illness, fever cough, etc.)
 - Follow social distancing and safety guidance. This includes wearing masks, staying six feet from others and hand washing. Visitors may choose to wear additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which will be made available upon request.
- Patients having surgery may have visitors with them until they are in their patient room, even if they arrive before 8 a.m. Patients under 18 may have two (2) parents or guardians visit any time of day.
- Patients at Atrium Health Navicent Rehabilitation Hospital may have no more than four (4) visitors at a time and visiting hours are 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sunday.
- Patients in Labor and Delivery (active labor before delivery) may have two (2) visitors in addition to a partner and birth coach.
- Patients receiving treatments for cancer are often immunocompromised and more vulnerable to infection. In this case, patients will not be allowed visitors if they have COVID-19 or might have COVID-19 (being tested).

Special Considerations

- Special circumstances will be managed by the treating physician and nursing unit leadership.
- Patients in hospice or palliative care may have two (2) visitors at a time at the bedside and one (1) visitor overnight.
- Exceptions, as determined by the treating physician and facility leadership, may include:
 - End of life circumstances
 - Communication barriers
 - Caregiver / Decision making assistance needed
 - Physical, Emotional, or psychiatric concerns where a caregiver is necessary.
- Children may be permitted to visit hospitalized patients under special circumstances such as visiting a dying family member. In these instances, parents and guardians should coordinate with the treating physician and nursing unit leadership.

COVID-19 Patients

COVID-19 patients and patients being tested for COVID-19 may have visitors. Visitors must wear a mask and may wear other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including a gown, gloves, and eye protection, which will be provided upon request. The visitor must stay in the patient room at all times with the door closed and will utilize a designated restroom based on the patient's location. Visitors are urged to eat prior to arrival, but to remain at least 6 feet away from the patient before removing a mask to eat. At the conclusion of the visit, visitors must exit the facility without visiting any other location.

Other considerations

- Overnight visitors must stay at the patient's bedside. If a patient needs an in-room procedure that requires the visitor to leave the room, the visitor may wait in the hallway outside the patient room.
- Some Intensive Care Units lack the capacity for overnight visitors. In these units, overnight visitors are at the discretion of unit leadership.
- Waiting rooms and communal sleeping areas are open.
- Some visitors arrive with patients via entrances other than the main visitor entrance (ex. Surgery, Emergency, Heart Procedures). In the event a patient who entered through any entrance other than the main visitor entrance is admitted and the visitor chooses to stay overnight, the visitor must check-in at the main entrance and receive a visitor band during visiting hours (10 a.m. to 7 p.m.). If the patient is admitted after visiting hours, the visitor may stay overnight and check-in at the main entrance during the next day's visiting hours.

This enhanced visitation policy applies to Atrium Health Navicent locations, including:

- Atrium Health Navicent Beverly Knight Olson Children's Hospital
- Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center
- Atrium Health Navicent Peach
- Atrium Health Navicent Baldwin
- Monroe County Hospital, an Atrium Health Navicent Partner
- Atrium Health Navicent Rehabilitation Hospital
- Atrium Health Navicent emergency rooms, urgent care centers, clinics and diagnostics centers

All facilities may be accessed through their main lobbies and/or emergency centers. Individuals with cough, fever, shortness of breath or other flu-like symptoms are asked to refrain from visiting. Greeters at public entrances will continue to ask basic screening questions, guide those seeking treatment to the appropriate location and assist visitors as needed.

Atrium Health Navicent recognizes that interacting with loved ones can be helpful to the healing process and strongly encourage everyone to utilize other forms of support for their loved ones, including phone calls and video chats on cell phones or other mobile devices. Patients have access to Wi-Fi to assist with mobile communication.

The health of our patients and the community is the highest concern at Atrium Health Navicent. Our policies and actions are designed to safeguard our community. We appreciate the community's cooperation and understanding with our efforts to mitigate the threat of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

Atrium Health Navicent also reminds the community to continue taking measures that are known to limit the spread of respiratory viruses. Health officials strongly encourage people to stay home when sick, maintain good respiratory etiquette such as hand washing and covering the nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, and most importantly, get vaccinated against flu and COVID-19 – including the latest COVID-19 fall boosters – to best protect against illness heading into the holiday season.

In addition to protecting against infection, both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines can protect against the downstream effects of those infections such as heart attack and stroke. People who are at high-risk for complications – particularly those with diabetes, high blood pressure or heart and lung problems – are more likely to experience a heart attack or stroke in the weeks following a flu or COVID-19 infection.

Patients are asked to only visit the emergency department if they are experiencing a serious or life-threatening illness or injury. Those who need medical attention for more routine cough, fever, fatigue and other flu-like symptoms should contact their primary care provider. Other options include urgent care centers and virtual visits.

For the latest information on Atrium Health Navicent's response to COVID-19, including our visitation policy, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org. Atrium Health Navicent reserves the right to update the visitation policy at any time, based on current COVID-19 and other respiratory virus conditions.

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of healthcare in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation's leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

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