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Phoebe Eases COVID-19 Visitation Restrictions

Albany, Ga. – Beginning Thursday, Phoebe will ease the visitation restrictions put in place at all its hospitals when the COVID-19 crisis began. “Our top priority is the safety of our patients, visitors, staff and the community. Since the number of COVID-19 patients in our hospitals has dramatically decreased, we can now cautiously and safely begin to allow a limited number of visitors for non-COVID patients,” said Steven Kitchen, MD, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital Chief Medical Officer.

Revisions to the hospital visitation policy include:

One visitor will be allowed per day for each patient during the hours of 9 a.m. – 7 p.m. All visitors are asked to enter and exit through the main entrance of the hospital. Visitors will be asked to sign in and out when entering and exiting the facility. All visitors will be required to wear a mask while in facility. If you do not have one, a mask will be provided.
Visitors may access the cafeteria and concession areas but will be asked to remain in the clinical unit of the hospital they are visiting.

Patients undergoing a surgery or other procedures may have one visitor accompany them during their stay.

Below exceptions may apply:

Patients who are at the end-of-life
Obstetric patients may have one birth partner and two visitors following the birth (during visiting hours)
Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) patients may have one birth parent plus one significant other
Minors under the age of 18 may have two parents or guardians
Patients who require assistance may have one caregiver accompany them.

“We understand how difficult it has been for patients not to be able to have their loved ones with them at their bedside over the last few months, but we had to restrict visitation for their own protection and to help minimize transmission of coronavirus. Families play a vital role in care and healing. We appreciate their understanding during our COVID-19 response, and we look forward to working with them closely as we move forward and begin to reopen visitation in all of our hospitals,” Dr. Kitchen said.

Children under age 18 will not be allowed in the hospitals except in end-of-life cases and for births of siblings. It is strongly recommended for their own safety that people over age 65, anyone with a chronic medical condition and pregnant women do not visit the hospital except to receive care.

Visitation is still restricted in emergency centers. At Phoebe’s main campus and at Phoebe Sumter, visitors are only allowed in the ER to accompany minors and patients who require a caregiver. “For everyone’s safety, we have to avoid having an ER waiting room crowded with patients and their family members. Additionally, in Albany, we will be making some facility modifications in our ER which will provide more space and allow us to resume limited visitation. We hope that construction will be finished by the end of July. Until then, for the safety of our patients, visitors, staff and community, we will stick with our current policy and will continue to stay in close communication with families who are unable to be with a loved one in the ER,” said James Black, MD, Phoebe Putney Health System Medical Director for Emergency Services.

ER visitation at Phoebe Worth will now allow for one visitor per non-COVID patient.

Phoebe leaders continue to monitor the number of COVID-19 cases and will make modifications to the visitation policy as appropriate. They are also working on policies that would allow limited visitation to COVID-19 patients under careful monitoring. Those details will be released when the policy is finalized and can be safely implemented.