

COVID-19 NICU VISITATION

PURPOSE:

This document serves to supplement the Texas Children's Hospital (TCH) Newborn Center (NBC) COVID-19 guidelines for managing neonates with exposure to or confirmed COVID-19 infection. This document contains recommendations on visitation to the NICU regarding COVID-PUI and COVID-positive patients and visitors.

DISCLAIMER:

This information may need to be adapted and adjusted accordingly based on local operations. As the situation is rapidly evolving, this document may be subject to frequent revisions.

STAKEHOLDERS:

All healthcare workers involved in the care of neonates in the TCH NBC, including Woodlands campus

CONTRIBUTORS:

Dr. Minal Patel (primary author)	Dr. Mona Khattab	Tanya Williams, MSN, RN, NE-BC
Dr. Suresh Gautham	Dr. Nathan Sundgren	Rebecca Schiff, MBA, BSN, RN, NE-BC
Dr. Lakshmi Katakam	Dr. Tiffany McKee-Garrett	Shonta' Davis, MSN, RN
Dr. Mohan Pammi	Dr. Lisa Owens	Neo Response Team
Dr. Michael Speer	Dr. Ganga Gokulakrishnan	Dr. Nancy Hurst

TERMINOLOGY:

AGP – Aerosol Generating Procedure or Population	PFW – Pavilion for Women
DHV – Designated Healthy Visitor	PPE – Personal Protective Equipment
EBM – Expressed Breast Milk	PUI – Person Under Investigation
MBU – Mother Baby Unit	SARS CoV-2 – novel coronavirus pathogen
NBC – Newborn Center	WOO – Woodlands
NRT – Neo Response Team	WT – West Tower
NTN – Newborn Transition Nurse	

TCH COVID Connect Site =

<http://connect2.texaschildrens.org/Pages/2020/June%202020/Reopening-and-Redesign-landing-page.aspx>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [Section I](#) – Neonate Born to a COVID-positive Mother
- [Section II](#) – NICU Patient with Exposure to a COVID-positive Individual
- [Section III](#) – Visitor with Exposure to a COVID-positive Individual
- [Section IV](#) – When COVID-positive Individuals Can Begin or Resume Visitation
- [Section V](#) – Exceptions to Visitation
- [Revisions](#)

SECTION I

NEONATE BORN TO A COVID-POSITIVE MOTHER

This section provides visitation recommendations for neonates born to COVID-positive mothers who require admission to the NICU. These recommendations apply to the immediate newborn period starting at time of admission to the NICU.

	WHO IS ALLOWED TO VISIT THE NICU?
Mom is healthy (asymptomatic, no COVID risk factors) and COVID test is pending	Designated healthy visitor
Mom is a COVID-PUI (has COVID risk factors or is symptomatic) and COVID test is pending	Designated healthy visitor
Mom is COVID-positive	Designated healthy visitor

DESIGNATED HEALTHY VISITOR (DHV)

- **One designated healthy visitor** is allowed in the NICU while the COVID-positive mother cannot visit.
 - o The DHV **must** be another adult caregiver who has not had any contact with the COVID-positive mother in the last 14 days **and** does not live in the same household (e.g. aunt, grandmother).
 - o Exceptions to this may occur for extenuating circumstances which should be discussed with NBC Leadership.
- This visitor must not be exhibiting **any** signs or symptoms of illness.
- This visitor will be screened per visitor screening protocol at hospital and unit entries and expected to wear the mask provided at all times.
- This visitor can visit at the bedside per standard TCH Policy.

WHEN TO RESUME STANDARD VISITATION

- Standard visitation can resume for mother and other adult caregivers in the same household (e.g. spouse) once the COVID-positive mother has recovered from illness and is no longer considered infectious.
- Criteria for establishing when a COVID-positive individual has recovered and is no longer infectious are provided in [Section IV](#).
- The DHV will stop visitation once the primary caregivers are able to resume visitation.

SECTION II

NICU PATIENT WITH EXPOSURE TO A COVID-POSITIVE INDIVIDUAL

This section provides visitation recommendations for NICU patients who have had an exposure to a confirmed COVID-positive individual while hospitalized. This does not pertain to neonates born to COVID-positive mothers.

COVID EXPOSURE FROM A NON-VISITOR

- If the NICU patient has a COVID exposure from someone other than their routine visitor(s), follow Infection Control recommendations regarding isolation and COVID testing for the patient.
- If the patient's routine visitor(s) also require COVID testing, visitation is not permitted until their test results are reviewed by NBC Leadership and discussed with Infection Control.
- If the patient's routine visitor(s) do NOT require COVID testing, visitation is permitted per standard TCH Policy.

COVID EXPOSURE FROM A VISITOR

- Any visitor (including a parent) who is COVID-positive will not be permitted to enter the NICU.
- Exceptions to visitation can be made in rare instances on a case-by-case basis and must be discussed with NBC Leadership. See [Section V](#).
- If a visitor discloses that they are newly COVID-positive, follow these steps:
 1. Collect the following information on all routine visitors (especially if they reside in the same household):
 - Any known or suspected exposure to COVID (date of exposure, from whom)
 - Any past or present symptoms (date symptoms FIRST appeared, type of symptoms)
 - When and where test was done (date of all tests, most important is date of FIRST positive test)
 - Recent visitation dates in the NICU
 - Does visitor have access to testing in the outpatient setting?
 2. Notify the visitors that they are not allowed to visit the NICU until further notice.
 - Typically, visitation plans are finalized in 1-2 days.
 3. Notify Nursing and NBC Leadership
 4. Determine the timeline for visitation as outlined in [Section IV](#).
 - You may contact Nursing or NBC Leadership for help in determining the timeline.
 - Of note, knowing if the family has access to testing affects the timeline, so it is important to have this information.
 5. Notify Infection Control and provide the details outlined in #2 and #4.
 - Infection Control may provide recommendations on patient testing and isolation.
 6. Review visitation timeline with the visitor(s).
 - COVID-positive individual and any other adult caregiver in the same household (exposed to COVID and therefore are COVID-PUI) will not be permitted to visit.
 - One designated healthy visitor is allowed in the NICU instead. Review [DHV guidelines](#) with the visitor to identify a suitable DHV.
 7. Document all the above information in the NICU COVID Checklist note in the EMR (.NEOCOVIDINITIAL).
 - Update the note periodically as more information is provided, including test results, ongoing/resolution of symptoms in visitor, etc.
 8. Place a comment in the "Sticky Note" of EMR stating the "COVID note completed on [date], please refer for details on testing, isolation, visitation."

- **Designated Healthy Visitor (DHV)**
 - **One designated healthy visitor** is allowed in the NICU while the COVID-positive individual cannot visit.
 - The DHV **must** be another adult caregiver who has not had any contact with the COVID-positive individual in the last 14 days **and** does not live in the same household (e.g. aunt, grandmother).
 - Exceptions to this may occur for extenuating circumstances which should be discussed with NBC Leadership.
 - This visitor must not be exhibiting **any** signs or symptoms of illness.
 - This visitor will be screened per visitor screening protocol at hospital and unit entries and expected to wear the mask provided at all times.
 - This visitor can visit at the bedside per standard TCH Policy.

- **When to Resume Standard Visitation**
 - Standard visitation can resume for all adults in the COVID-positive individual's household once the COVID-positive individual has recovered from illness and is no longer considered infectious.
 - Criteria for establishing when a COVID-positive individual has recovered and is no longer infectious are provided in [Section IV](#).
 - The DHV will stop visitation once the primary caregivers are able to resume visitation.

SECTION III

VISITOR WITH EXPOSURE TO A COVID-POSITIVE INDIVIDUAL

This section provides visitation recommendations for NICU visitors who have had an exposure to a confirmed COVID-positive individual outside of the hospital. This does not pertain to visitors who are already known to be COVID-positive themselves.

If a visitor discloses that he/she has had a COVID exposure (contact with an individual known to be COVID-positive) outside of the hospital, follow these steps:

1. Collect the following information:
 - Date of exposure, from whom
 - Any past or present symptoms (date symptoms FIRST appeared, type of symptoms)
 - Does visitor has access to testing in the outpatient setting? If yes, any COVID testing already completed (date)?
 - Recent visitation dates in the NICU
 - If the exposed visitor has recently visited in the NICU, notify Infection Control and determine if patient is also considered to be exposed. If yes, refer to [Section II](#).
 - Has the 2nd routine visitor also been exposed (do they live in the same household)?
2. Notify the visitors that they are not allowed to visit the NICU until further notice.
 - Typically, visitation plans are finalized in 1-2 days.
3. Notify Nursing and NBC Leadership and discuss visitation plan.
4. Recommend the visitor stay on home isolation for 14 days from exposure, obtain COVID testing outpatient at least 5 days after the exposure, and monitor closely for development of any new symptoms during the 14 days.
 - Exposed visitor (who is considered COVID-PUI) is not allowed to visit the NICU during this 14-day period.
 - One designated healthy visitor is allowed in the NICU instead. Review [DHV guidelines](#) with the visitor to identify a suitable DHV.
 - Standard visitation can resume once the 14-day period has ended.
5. Document all the above information in the NICU COVID Checklist note in the EMR (.NEOCOVIDINITIAL).
 - Update the note periodically as more information is provided, including test results, development of symptoms in visitor, etc.
6. Place a comment in the “Sticky Note” of EMR stating the “COVID note completed on [date], please refer for details on testing, isolation, visitation.”

SECTION IV

WHEN COVID-POSITIVE INDIVIDUALS CAN BEGIN OR RESUME VISITATION

This section details criteria for establishing when a COVID-positive individual has recovered and is able to visit in the NICU. This pertains to COVID-positive mothers who recently delivered and any other COVID-positive visitor.

The CDC and AAP recommend a symptom/time-based strategy be used to determine when COVID-positive individuals (visitors) who will interact with vulnerable populations (NICU patients) have recovered from illness and are no longer infectious. Test-based strategy is no longer recommended.

Recent evidence shows that recovered persons can continue to shed detectable virus for up to 3 months after illness onset. However, concentrations of virus are much lower than during illness, and viable virus (replication-competent) has **not** been recovered. **Therefore, infectiousness is unlikely after 10 days in immunocompetent individuals, and after 20 days in immunocompromised individuals or those who had severe illness. Per AAP, extending to this period to 14-20 days is a reasonable option.**

ASYMPTOMATIC VISITOR WITH POSITIVE COVID TEST

NICU visitation is permitted once **ALL** of the following criteria are met:

1. **10 days*** has passed since the first positive COVID test
2. Individual has remained completely asymptomatic during this time period
3. Optional COVID testing can be obtained **at the end of the 10-day period**

Pending test result	Visitation not permitted until test results are reviewed by NBC Leadership.
Negative	Visitation permitted per standard policy if all other criteria have been met.
Positive	* Visitor(s) must wait 14 days (instead of 10 days) since the first positive COVID test.
Unable to get tested	* Visitor(s) must wait 14 days (instead of 10 days) since the first positive COVID test.

SYMPTOMATIC VISITOR WITH POSITIVE COVID TEST

NICU visitation is permitted once **ALL** of the following criteria are met:

1. **10 days*** have passed since symptoms first appeared
2. At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications
3. Resolution of ALL symptoms for at least 24 hours (not just improvement in symptoms)
 - Visitors with ongoing symptoms of any illness are not permitted in the NICU
 - This may extend the timeline beyond the initial 10-14 days
4. Optional COVID testing can be obtained **at the end of the 10-day period**

Pending test result	Visitation not permitted until test results are reviewed by NBC Leadership.
Negative	Visitation permitted per standard policy if all other criteria have been met.
Positive	* Visitor(s) must wait 14 days (instead of 10 days) since symptoms first appeared.
Unable to get tested	* Visitor(s) must wait 14 days (instead of 10 days) since symptoms first appeared.

VISITORS WHO ARE IMMUNOCOMPROMISED OR HAD SEVERE/CRITICAL ILLNESS

1. Follow guidelines above for "[Symptomatic Visitor with Positive COVID Test](#)" but use **20 days** for the timeline since symptoms first appeared.
2. No repeat follow-up testing is necessary.
3. Guidance on who is considered to have severe/critical infection are provided on the TCH Connect site.

SECTION V

EXCEPTIONS TO VISITATION

This section details visitation exceptions for NICU patients with extenuating circumstances. Each scenario should be discussed with NBC Leadership prior to allowing any exceptions.

COMMON INDICATIONS FOR ALLOWING 2 HEALTHY VISITORS AT THE SAME TIME:

- Medical equipment education
- Hands-on training for medically-complex discharge
- Tracheostomy patient discharge
- End-of-life or redirection of care
- Acutely decompensating patient with life-threatening condition

COMMON INDICATIONS FOR ALLOWING COVID-POSITIVE OR COVID-PUI VISITORS:

- Discharging patient home
 1. In most cases, COVID-positive individuals will not be permitted in the NICU for discharge.
 2. Discharge process may include one of the following options:
 - Discharge to a third-party adult caregiver
 - Social Work and Case Management can assist with documentation.
 - Allowing COVID-PUI individual (who may be exposed but is not COVID-positive) to pick up patient during a [scheduled 1-hour visit](#)
 - Staff taking patient out of unit to building entry to complete discharge process with COVID-PUI or COVID-positive individuals
 3. Exceptions may be made with approval from NBC Leadership.
- End-of-life or redirection of care
- Acutely decompensating patient with life-threatening condition
- Only immediate family members who live within the same household will be allowed to visit for end-of-life or acutely decompensating patients.
 - Given the space limitations in the NICU, 2 visitors at a time is recommended.
 - If additional visitors need to visit, an additional designated time should be scheduled.

VISITATION for COVID-POSITIVE or COVID-PUI INDIVIDUALS for INDICATED EXCEPTIONS:

- **NICU patients whose visitors are COVID-positive or COVID-PUI**
 - ***Scheduled 1-hour visitation:***
 - Charge RN or designee will assist in arranging scheduled visits to the NICU using the following:
 - Scheduled visit can occur up to 3 times per week.
 - Scheduled visit will occur on day shift for 1-hour between 1 pm to 4 pm.
 - The visitors should be given the phone number of the unit (nursing leader, designee, or front desk) to call when they arrive to the hospital.
 - Upon arrival to building entry:
 - The visitors should call the number provided to alert the NICU of his/her arrival.
 - The visitors should immediately don face masks.
 - Security should be notified to escort the visitors from building entry to NICU entry. If security is unavailable, another unit level designee may complete this.
 - Upon arrival to the NICU:

- Charge RN or designee will escort the visitors to the neonate's bedspace.
 - Pathway taken within the NICU should minimize exposure to other patients and HCWs. Barrier screens can be positioned along the pathway of open bed spaces to minimize exposure.
 - Bedside RN will monitor the visitors using the following guidelines:
 - During the visit, the visitors must wear a face mask at all times and adhere to strict hand hygiene.
 - For any COVID-positive visitors, they must also wear an isolation gown.
 - If in a private room, the door should be kept closed. If an open bedspace, try to relocate the patient to a private room. If unable to do so, use barrier screens around the bedspace.
 - During the visit, medical staff should limit in-person interaction and assure appropriate PPE is worn when entering the patient's bedspace or interacting with any visitors.
 - At the end of the visit:
 - Bedside RN will notify Charge RN or designee, who will then escort the visitors out of the NICU.
 - Security should then escort the visitors to building exit. If security is unavailable, another unit level designee may complete this.
- **NICU patients who are COVID-positive or COVID-PUI**
 - Similar guidelines can be followed as detailed above in [scheduled 1-hour visitation](#)
 - If the visitors themselves are not COVID-positive:
 - Barrier screens do not need to be positioned along the NICU pathway to the bedspace
 - Visitors only need to wear a face mask. Gown is not required.

REVISIONS

DATE	REVISIONS
6/26/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section I and II – updated to scheduled 1-hour visitation • Section III – added visitor exposure to COVID-positive person • Section IV – statements from AAP/CDC • Section V – added exceptions to visitation
6/29/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section II and III – clarified steps for reporting exposures
7/13/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section II and III – clarified steps for reporting exposures • Section V – clarified discharge options
7/27/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section I – removed 10 minute visit and scheduled 1-hour visitation • Section II and III – reordered steps for exposures, removed scheduled 1-hour visitation • Section IV – updated criteria for recovery from illness • Section V – clarified discharge options