

Institutional Handbook of Operating Procedures
Policy 09.07.01

Section: Clinical Policies	Responsible Vice President: Executive Vice President, UTMB Health System
Subject: Visitor Information	Responsible Entity: Patient Services

I. Title

Hospital and Ambulatory Services Visitation

II. Policy

The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) provides a caring environment while recognizing the importance of visitation to our patients, their families, and friends. These guidelines were developed for visitation while considering the following factors: a) the benefits of visitation to the patient; b) the impact of visitation on patient care; and c) the safety and security of patients, visitors, and employees. The following guidelines shall be followed to assure that patients and their visitors achieve a positive visitation experience without compromising patient care, confidentiality, and security.

Each patient has the right (subject to his or her consent, which can be withdrawn at any time) to receive the visitors whom he or she designates, including but not limited to a spouse, a domestic partner (including a same-sex domestic partner), a family member or friend. Visitation privileges shall not be restricted, limited, or otherwise denied on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. The type and number of visitors present may however be reasonably restricted or limited by staff to the extent such restriction or limitation is clinically necessary and communicated by the health care providers to the patient (or his or her designated representative or decision maker). The patient’s condition, the type of patient care unit, safety, and privacy are some of the factors to be considered in this determination.

Inpatients are advised of hospital visitation policies through the patient handbook and verbally by staff members; ambulatory areas and the emergency services areas have this information posted and may be informed verbally by staff members.

III. Visitation Guidelines

- A.** All visitors should be free from recent exposure to communicable diseases and without fever or visible signs of illness. During times of infectious outbreak in the community (e.g., influenza, measles, mumps, chicken pox, COVID-19, etc.), the Department of Healthcare Epidemiology may recommend restrictions in visitation. Visitors to patients in isolation are subject to isolation guidelines.
- B.** All visitors are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate and courteous manner:
 - Adhere to visitation policy.
 - Refrain from smoking. UTMB is a non-smoking institution and smoking is prohibited everywhere on campus, as well as in UTMB affiliated facilities and vehicles. Do not consume alcoholic beverages on campus.
 - Running, littering or loitering in the hallways is prohibited.
 - Refrain from loud conversations or from any behavior that may be disruptive to a

- patient
- Children should be under the close supervision of an adult at all times and managed appropriately
- Approved visitors of the TDCJ hospital must abide by the regulations established by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.
- Dress appropriately.

- C. Because visiting hours or the number of visitors may be restricted, visitors are encouraged to inquire about area specific visitation standards.
- D. Visitors under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult and the patient may not be the accompanying adult of visiting minors. In the ISCU/ISCI or PICU units, a screening tool will be used to assist the charge nurse in determining the appropriateness of a child’s visitation. All visitors to these units must call from the phone outside the unit to request entry.

IV. Hospital Guidelines

A. After Hours Access and Overnight Visitors

Overnight visitation is allowed at the discretion of the unit charge nurse based on patient need and/or request. Visitors of patients may be authorized to remain in public waiting areas overnight by the unit charge nurse. Staff may awaken visitors in public waiting areas early in the morning to allow for cleaning of area and to prepare area for additional daytime visitors.

- B. For **visitors** entering the hospital between 9:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m., staff at the reception desk will issue a visitor pass. The visitor’s name and destination will be recorded.

All visitors should check with the patient’s nurse for additional standards or restrictions particular to the patient.

Unit/Area	Standards
TDCJ	Refer to Policy 9.9.2, Security Associated with the TDCJ Hospital
ISCU/ISCI/PICU	Parents determine the list of approved visitors. Visitors must have appropriate identification.
Recovery Room	Visitation is based on special circumstances at the discretion of the charge nurse
Adult ICU’s	Permission must be granted by the receptionist or approved by the unit charge nurse over the designated phones.

C. Guidelines During Winter Flu Season

1. Restrictions for Child visitors

a) Neonatal ICU: (In winter months October-March), children under 8 years of age shall not be allowed to visit the newborn regardless of symptoms unless under exceptional circumstances (will require approval by nurse or physician).

b) Mother-Baby Unit, Nurseries: Brothers and sisters of the baby shall be allowed to visit if they are not experiencing any respiratory symptoms or fever. All other children under 8 years of age may not be allowed to visit regardless of whether they have symptoms or not.

c) General Pediatric Unit and Pediatric ICU All children with a respiratory illness shall not be allowed to visit. Exceptions for mildly ill brothers and sisters may be allowed by the unit nurse or physician with implementation of infection control measures.

d) Adult Units: children under 8 years of age shall not be allowed to visit a patient, regardless of symptoms unless under exceptional circumstances (will require approval by a nurse).

2. Restrictions for Parent/Family Caregiver of the Patient

a) Proven or Suspected Influenza (Flu): Parent/family caregiver who has the flu should avoid close contact with the patient until the following conditions have been met:

- Has received antiviral medications for 48 hours.
- Fever has fully resolved without the use of fever reducing medication like Tylenol
- Must follow additional procedures below when visiting or caring for the infant (see below).
- Exceptions to this restriction under exceptional circumstances will need physician approval.

b) URI: Parent/family caregivers with any upper respiratory viral illness or flu (flu patients must meet the above conditions under “Proven or Suspected Influenza”) may care for the patient by adhering to the following procedures:

- Wash hands
- Put on gown and gloves
- Put on facemask

3. Screening of visitors during winter flu season

a) Neonatal ICU, Mother-Baby Unit, Nurseries: All visitors and parents/family caregivers shall be screened for respiratory illness by the unit front desk staff.

b) General Pediatric Unit and Pediatric ICU: All visitors will be alerted via notice at unit entrance to self-screen for respiratory illness, and to speak with the unit nurse if necessary for guidance.

c) Adult Units: all visitors will be alerted via notices at hospital entrance and near patient care areas to self-screen for respiratory illness, and to speak with the unit nurse if necessary for guidance.

d) Respiratory Symptoms: Visitors with any of the following symptoms shall not be allowed to visit unless approved by the unit nurse:

- Cough
- Nasal congestion
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Fever

V. Ambulatory Guidelines

Ambulatory Services welcomes visitors. The type and number of visitors present in the exam or procedure room may be reasonably restricted or limited by staff to the extent such restriction or limitation is clinically necessary and communicated by the health care providers to the patient (or his or her designated representative or decision maker). Patient safety and privacy are additional factors to be

considered in this determination.

VI. Enforcement/ Compliance

- A. All healthcare staff and employees are responsible for the enforcement of this policy. Employees visiting patients are also subject to the information listed in this document.
- B. Visitors who are unresponsive to requests or displaying inappropriate behavior will be referred to the appropriate nursing administrator or clinic manager and/or University Police/Security.

VII. Related UTMB Policies and Procedures

- IHOP - 08.01.04 - Workplace Violence
- IHOP - 08.02.05 - Security Management
- IHOP - 09.03.13 - Patients' Rights and Responsibilities

VIII. Dates Approved or Amended

<i>Originated: 3/29/1999</i>	
<i>Reviewed with Changes</i>	<i>Reviewed without Changes</i>
7/28/2014	
1/19/2016	
05/16/2022	

IX. Contact Information

Patient Services
(409) 772-4772

UTMB HANDBOOK OF OPERATING PROCEDURES

Section 9	Clinical Policies	03/29/99-Originated
Subject 9.7	Visitor Information	07/28/14-Reviewed w changes -Reviewed w/o changes
Policy 9.7.1	Hospital and Clinic Visitation	Health System -Author