



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### New Policy Relating to Visitors Under 16 Years of Age

#### **Why is Packard Children's closing off the hospital to all visitors under the age of 16?**

Due to the severity of the H1N1 flu and its potential to spread to children and expectant mothers, effective Monday, October 19, 2009, Packard Children's and Stanford Hospital will no longer allow visitors or family members under the age of 16 years to visit in the hospitals. This includes clinics within the main hospital building. This decision is to keep our patient care and common areas as healthy and free from flu exposure as possible. The implications for infants, children and pregnant women who contract the flu can be very serious, and while we empathize greatly for our patients' family and friends, our number one priority and concern remains the well-being and health of our patients and employees. This policy will be in effect until further notice and will be re-evaluated following the flu season.

#### **Does this policy apply to patients under 16 years old?**

No. This policy only applies to visitors and family members who are under 16 years old.

#### **Who was involved in making this decision?**

Prior to making this decision there was an ongoing sharing of information with teams across the hospital, from infectious disease to cardiology to newborn services to Child Life. These groups as well as other groups collaborated daily to determine the best and safest policy for protecting the health and safety of our patients.

#### **How was the 16 year old limit determined?**

Due to the fact that there is no medical literature or regulatory guidance from the CDC, Santa Clara County or other health agencies on this issue, the Packard Children's Family Advisory Council, the infectious disease specialists in consultation with other physicians and our executive administration decided upon this age limit. Additionally, many other hospitals are establishing a similar age restrictions for visitation throughout the country. The disease is more common in younger children.

#### **Is it normal for a hospital to restrict visitors based on age?**

Yes. Many other medical institutions throughout the country are following this practice and are restricting visits by children during this flu season.

#### **Are you doing this because there was an outbreak of swine flu at the hospitals?**

No. This is a proactive measure we are taking to protect our patients. However, we have had exposures by visitors to the hospital that resulted in illness which is why we are taking this action. We hope to have an uneventful flu season and are optimistic that this proactive strategy will aid in limiting the presence and spread of H1N1 throughout the hospital.

### **Are any other hospitals doing this? What about local hospitals?**

Yes. Many other medical institutions throughout the country are following this practice and are restricting visits by younger children during this flu season. Stanford Hospital is implementing the same on the same day as Packard Children's – Monday, October 19, 2009.

We understand that other Bay Area hospitals are considering similar policies.

### **Is this policy being applied to the off-site clinics?**

Not currently, but we strongly encourage parents not to bring visitors or family members under the age of 16 with them to clinic appointments.

### **Does this policy apply to the clinics located within the hospital building?**

Yes. This policy will apply to all out-patient areas housed within the hospital including Rehabilitation Services, Oncology, Cardiology, PDC, Dialysis Unit, APU (Ambulatory Procedure Unit) and Day Hospital. We also strongly urge our visitors to comply with this policy in the ambulatory care clinics and discourage parents from bringing additional family members to clinic appointments in order to keep our patients and our employees safe. Clinic signage will also be put in place alerting parents that children under 16 will not be allowed in the hospital.

### **Is this new policy being implemented at Packard Children's Emergency Department?**

No. Due to the nature of emergency situations where there is no time to make child care arrangements, the Emergency Department will not be implementing this new policy. However, everyone entering the Emergency Department will be required to wear a mask.

### **What if a child has had the H1N1 vaccine and/or the regular seasonal flu vaccine?**

While we encourage anyone who falls in a high risk category for H1N1—such as children or pregnant women—to receive a flu vaccine (or H1N1 vaccine when it is available), this does not change our policy of restricting visitor or family members under the age of 16 from entering the hospital. For patient safety reasons, it has been recommended that all children under 16 do not enter the hospital during flu season as vaccinations are not 100% effective.

### **How long will this new policy be in place?**

We hope to have an uneventful flu season and are optimistic that this strategy will aid in limiting the presence and spread of H1N1 throughout the hospital. While flu season typically ends in April, the policy will be in effect until further notice as there is no way to predict an exact end date for flu season. Our number one priority and concern remains the well-being and health of our patients and employees.

### **How will the hospitals implement this policy?**

Lucile Packard Children's Hospital currently controls all entry points into the hospital, including corridors that directly link Stanford Hospital to Packard Children's. When visitors arrive at the hospital, they will be required to check-in as per current procedure, and they will be asked if they have any flu-like symptoms and whether or not they have visitors with them that are under 16 years old. If they do, the visitor restriction will be explained and if they have questions or concerns a supervisor will be contacted to assist them. Assistance will also be available at the Information Desk or by calling Patient Relations at: (650) 498-HUGS (4847). Signage and other patient communications about the new policy will also be available at both hospitals.

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### **Are parents under the age of 16 able to visit and/or stay with their child if he/she is a patient at the hospital?**

Yes, parents under the age of 16 will be able to visit as well as stay with their child if the child is a patient at the hospital. However, any parent at any age who is showing symptoms of influenza will not be able to enter the hospital unless under end-of-life or other extremely difficult circumstances.

### **What if a parent arrives at the hospital with visitors or family members who are under 16 years old?**

We are notifying all of our patients about the change in policy so that they can plan ahead. However, we certainly understand that this policy change impacts some families who are already facing extremely difficult circumstances. Families who need special assistance should contact Patient Relations at (650) 498-HUGS (4847).

### **What if a parent does not have child care available? And what happens if a hospitalized child is facing extremely difficult circumstances?**

We strongly encourage all parents not to bring any visitors or family members under 16 to visit during flu season in order to protect all of our patients and employees. However, we certainly understand that this policy change impacts some families who are already facing extremely difficult circumstances and if you need special assistance, contact Patient Services at (650) 498-HUGS (4847).

### **How will surgeries be managed if families arrive with other children under the age of 16?**

The surgical department already has a 'no visitors under the age of 16' policy in the post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) and this policy will be extended to the pre-op area (including the waiting room) as well. Exceptions may be made for critical cases in certain circumstances. Assistance will be available at Patient Relations at (650) 498-HUGS (4847).

### **How will this affect families currently dealing with end-of-life or other difficult health situations with their child?**

If visitation is deemed necessary given the patient's condition or other extremely difficult circumstances, the hospital will work with families on a case-by-case basis.

### **What if a family is coming from out-of-town and bringing siblings? Are there any recommendations for childcare services in the area?**

We strongly recommend that families do not bring siblings to the hospital. Packard Children's does not provide childcare services and currently does not have childcare facilities in the hospital. If families are coming from out of town, they must bring an adult childcare provider to care for non-patient siblings and must make accommodations to stay outside of the hospital. Families can contact their assigned social worker or the Social Services office at (650) 497-8303 for assistance.

### **What if an expectant or new mom is in the hospital for an extended stay? Are her children under 16 allowed to visit?**

If there are exceptional maternity circumstances, these will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For antepartum patients with long-term stays, we will try to make arrangements for special periodic visitation for any children not displaying signs of influenza-like symptoms.

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### **What about hospital volunteers?**

The age restriction also extends to any hospital volunteers who are younger than 16 years old.

### **What about children in the hospital school?**

The children currently enrolled will be allowed to remain in the program until their respective family member leaves the hospital, although no new children will be admitted into the program. Additional options for these children are currently being reviewed.

### **What is Packard Children's doing to control the spread of the flu among its employees and to its patients?**

Packard Children's has been and continues to work with staff to have them vaccinated. We are also instructing staff to stay home if they are ill. Meanwhile, we are advising all staff, visitors and parents (regardless of age) to not enter the hospital if symptoms of an influenza-like illness are present (i.e. fever of 100 F or above and cough, sore throat, runny nose or nasal congestion.)