

Tips If A Family Member Is Hospitalized

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If someone in your family is hospitalized during the COVID-19 pandemic designate one person to communicate with the hospital. That person can then communicate to your broader family, faith community and friendship circle.

When you or a loved one is hospitalized, find out from the nurse:

- the current hospital visiting policy (ie. no visitors, exceptions, hours)
- usage restrictions for cell phones/face time
- items you bring from home (ie. clothes, food, laptop, iPad)
- the telephone extension of the unit/ward
- the patient's telephone extension

If you or your loved one is in the hospital and is too unwell to communicate, ask:

- the best time is to call the hospital for an update
- how often the doctor or nurse will call
- if your priest permitted to visit

More than likely, the hospital will have a no visitor policy in effect. An exception may or may not be made if someone is near death. Other than a cell phone, many hospitals restrict patients from bringing anything to the hospital from home. Some hospitals have restrictions for internet use (so all patients can have access).

To create a deeper sense of intimacy when communicating with your loved one while apart – if you are home, light a candle when you are talking with your loved one who is in the hospital. Or, sit in their favourite chair while you talk. Wear your loved one's old sweatshirt, housecoat, slippers. Do these things with intention and with full awareness. Allow yourself the self-care and love that you want to both give and receive. Let your loved one in the hospital know what you are doing and why – this will only let them know how much they are loved.

Should your loved one become critically ill and no longer able to manage communicating independently, those who are holding vigil at home should try to find out from the nurse what kind of communication is possible at the hospital. For example, can a telephone be placed near your loved one so that you can offer parting words or a prayer or listen to a favourite piece of music together - one last time? Find out if the hospital has a chaplain – they will do their very best in order to assist you and facilitate your request. As COVID-19 spreads, more hospital staff and chaplains will become ill and your request may take more time to co-ordinate; even so, please ask.

