

Hospital Visiting Guidelines for Therapy Dog Handlers

Planning Your Visits at LHSC:

- The LHSC leader of assigned area (hereafter referred to as LHSC leader) will contact you to set up a mutually convenient schedule for the therapy dog program
- The LHSC leader will inform the hospital's Security Services of your planned visit so that your arrival will be expected
- Plan to wear your LHSC Volunteer ID at all times while at the hospital and make sure your dog wears its therapy dog scarf and LHSC photo ID

Please Note: Only dogs that have a clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian, are in good health, clean, well groomed, with clipped toenails, have all the necessary vaccinations, are free of all enteric parasites, skin disorders, infectious diseases, and fleas and ticks are permitted to participate in therapy within the hospital.

Within one week before entering the hospital and before each visit

- Verify that your dog is free of any skin conditions or wounds and as had no unusual episodes of vomiting, diarrhea, excessive sneezing/coughing. If these symptoms are present, the dog should be one week post resolution before entering the hospital.
- The dog should not be under any treatment with non-topical antimicrobials, or with any immunosuppressive doses of medications for one week before visit.

Within 24 hours before entering the hospital and before each visit:

- Check your dog for cleanliness, odor, and flea or tick infestation. Bathe with a pet shampoo and groom the dog with a good brushing (use a shedding tool if necessary). Clean eyes, ears and teeth, trim and/or file nails.
- Call LHSC leader to change or cancel scheduled visit and together decide upon mutually agreeable as leader will as well.

Immediately before the visit:

- Wipe the dog down with an almost dry washcloth to reduce the dander, which might otherwise become airborne.
- Bring a clean drinking bowl in a clean and sealed plastic bag with you in case your dog needs a drink of water while visiting the hospital
- Attend to the animal's comfort needs before entering the hospital and clean up as needed

During Your Visit:

- Sign in at Volunteer Services before proceeding to the assigned unit
- Ensure the visit is solely on the assigned unit
- If asked to visit a patient on another unit, respectfully decline
- If a patient is being discharged and you are asked to visit at their home, respectfully decline
- Ensure the therapy dog is on a six-foot long, appropriate canine leash (i.e., non-retractable) wearing a non-slip collar & within an arm's length from you at all times
- Remain with the therapy dog at all times and do not enter the following areas:
 - Patient rooms with isolation precautions in place or with a 'Stop' sign on the door, unless permitted by Infection Control and the attending physician in a written order
 - Patient Rooms with Exclamation Mark (aggressive behavior) supervised visits with staff presence or in hallway when applicable

High-risk critical care areas

- Dialysis and burn units
- Nurseries
- Areas where invasive procedures are performed
- Medication preparation areas
- Food preparation and dining areas (including cafeterias)
- Utility and storage rooms

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- Linen and laundry areas
 - Patient bathrooms, showers and therapy pools, including change rooms
 - Other locations identified by hospital staff
 - Keep the therapy dog away from potentially hazardous situations (e.g., shunts, chest tubes, surgical wounds, intravenous sites, bandages/dressings, or other areas of potential infection and dangerous chemicals)
 - Allow the dog to interact only with the assigned patient(s) in the designated location(s) and for the designated time. Ensure the dog's behavior is appropriate
 - Ensure hand hygiene best practices are followed as per training during orientation to unit.
 - Handler, patient, staff, and visitors practice hand hygiene both before and after each animal contact.
 - Ensure that handler, patient, staff, and visitors do not eat or drink during visit.
 - Respect the rights of patients who do not want dogs nearby and separate the individuals and dogs involved. Be prepared to remove the dog immediately if staff request it for any reason
- If the patient requests that an animal be placed on the bed, require that the handler:
- Check for visible soiling of bed linens first
 - Place a disposable, impermeable barrier between the animal and the bed; throw the barrier away after use
 - If a disposable barrier is not available, a pillowcase, towel, or extra bedsheet can be used.
 - Place such an item in the laundry immediately after use and never use it for multiple patients
- Do not allow your dog to drink directly from toilets, sinks or drinking fountains. Carry a bowl or container and fill it from a sink in a public washroom and ensure floor is wiped dry
 - Take the dog's bathroom breaks away from entrances and outdoor eating areas. Pick up all solid waste and dispose of it properly in an appropriate outdoor waste container as soon as possible
 - Clean up any "accident" the animal may have while in hospital and notify unit staff of the mishap
 - Do not allow patients to give food to your therapy dog

Ensure any clean up that may be necessary in a session is done in the following manner:

When in the hospital, but not on unit floor:

- Immediately clean up the area to the best of your ability – use doggy bags, Kleenex etc.
- If area wet – (even after initial clean up) – look for closest "over the spill" station. Place pad and/or pop up safety message over area
- Call Customer Support at 35959 (UH) or (53939) VH to say there is a clean up required and give exact location.
- Once call has been placed, continue to unit and inform area leader/designate of call placed.

During Visit on Unit:

- Wash hands promptly!
- Notify the unit staff of the accident immediately; unit staff will notify unit Environmental Service Worker (ESW)
- Notify LHSC leadership and staff immediately if the animal urinates, defecates or vomits on a patient as further action will be required
- Using gloves, clean the area by picking up the feces or urine
- Place any animal feces and/or soiled paper towels in a plastic bag, and into designated waste container
- Soak the area with hospital disinfectant – caviwipes while wearing gloves
- Wipe the area with a clean paper towel
- Dispose of the paper towel in the plastic bag
- Dispose of secured bag in designated waste container

After the Visit:

- All who have come into contact with the Pet Therapy dog (including handler, patient, staff, and visitors) must wash their hands
- Sign out at Volunteer Services when leaving the hospital
- St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program will notify the clinical unit leadership if a dog is diagnosed with a communicable disease post visit
- Upon exiting building, attend to animals needs and clean up as necessary