



Tips for Visiting

By: [CVH Team](#)

Visits from friends can be uplifting, both for the person who is ill and their families. However, as the person becomes weaker, or as caregiving becomes more demanding, families may not have enough energy to meet with visitors. Here are some simple ideas to make sure you arrive at a good time and that your visit is appreciated and useful.

- Call the person or family members before arriving to see if it is a good time for a visit. If you want to bring children, ask if that would be all right.
- If the person is in an advanced stage of illness, keep your visit to 20-30 minutes or less.
- Try not to interfere with regular schedules. If a meal or snack arrives, encourage the person to eat while you are there, and provide whatever help the person wants.
- If the person is in bed, pull up a chair instead of standing. This allows the person to talk to you at eye level.
- If your visit is longer than 30 minutes, be sensitive to the fact the person may need to use the toilet and may not be comfortable doing so with you there. You could offer to get the primary caregiver or offer to leave if the person needs some privacy.
- Check with a caregiver before bringing food. The person may have a craving for a certain food or have specific food restrictions.
- If the person is in bed, check the bedside table to see that it is well-equipped. Are there tissues, a telephone, a full glass of water, eye glasses (if worn), lotions for skin, or lip balm for lips? If so, you may want to assist the person in using these products.
- Offer to comb the person's hair or clean their face with a warm washcloth.
- If you are a regular visitor, offer to help organize or limit other visitors.
- If the person says "*I'm feeling tired*" or something along those lines, respond promptly and cut the visit short.
- Sometimes people grow tired of their surroundings. If they are able, they might enjoy sitting on a deck, or going for a walk or a drive. If they spent most or all of the day in bed, they may enjoy having their bed moved closer to a window, or having the window opened on a nice day.
- If you want to bring a present, ask family members what might be appreciated. Suggestions include a light blanket, new comfortable pyjamas or a small radio, CD player or other electronic equipment.
- Offer to do some errands for the person or the family. This may include grocery shopping, cleaning or yard work (such as shovelling snow or mowing the lawn).
- Be flexible, as plans can change at a moment's notice. The person may not feel well or may want to change the day's plan.

As illness progresses, the person who is ill will be less able to take part in conversation, but this does not necessarily mean that visitors should stop coming. Friends and family may still be welcome. Your presence, the touch of your hand or the sound of your voice may provide comfort. The key is to do what the person has asked or what the family requests.

Sometimes, people who are seriously ill do not want any visitors other than immediate family. Even long-time friends may be told that visitors should not come. The person may feel too exhausted to visit, and may feel embarrassed about physical changes that have occurred. This may be upsetting for well-intentioned friends, but it is quite common and should not be taken as a comment on the closeness of the relationship. The person's wishes should be respected, as their comfort overrides other issues. If visiting is not possible, other ways to show that you are thinking of the person and family include sending a card or e-mail or phoning.

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