

 Lakeridge Health <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harmonized	Mental Health: Safety Search of Patients and Environment Policy and Procedure	
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Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures for conducting a search of a patient or visitor, their belongings or environment and to describe the circumstances in which a search may be conducted and actions when refusal to participate occurs. This policy and described processes apply to individuals in the emergency room and mental health program.

Policy:

Lakeridge Health strives to provide a safe and therapeutic environment for all patients, staff and visitors, while respecting the rights of individuals. A search of a patient, their belongings and/or the environment may be undertaken when there is a concern for the safety of the individual, staff, the environment or other individuals. The patient will be informed of the requirement for searches within the context of the hospitalization and treatment.

The scope of any search must be minimally intrusive. For example, a person will be asked to reveal all items in their possession, including the contents of anything they are carrying with them to a registered health professional and/or a member of Security.

Lakeridge Health does not have the authority to conduct a search on a visitor or voluntary patient without consent. If a visitor or voluntary patient refuses a request to search, appropriate responses are described in the section; *refusal to consent*. Consent should be sought before conducting any type of search.

Individual units/areas may have additional written guidelines for searches depending on the clinical needs of the patient population.

A Search May Be Conducted in the Following Circumstances:

1. Any person requiring treatment /admission, that a health professional has reason to believe due to their history, current mental status, patient reported or reported by others that they

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may be carrying weapons, sharps, medications, alcohol, ignition materials (matches/lighters etc.), objects that could be modified to inflict self-harm or harm to others.

2. Any person brought to the hospital under the Mental Health Act, that a registered health care professional has reason to believe may possess items that may be used to harm self or others and who has **not** been previously searched by police. Confirmation that a police search was carried out must be obtained and documented.
3. Any person that a registered health professional has reason to believe may possess items that may be used to harm self or others.
4. If an individual is an inpatient and it is suspected the individual used alcohol or substances while off unit. Room, individual and/or milieu searches to be executed to ensure safety of the patient, staff, visitors and co-patients.

Definition(s)

Dangerous Weapon: Any device that can cause severe injury or death when used in an aggressive manner e.g. includes but not limited to sharps.

Dangerous Substance: Any chemical that can cause severe illness, injury or death when used aggressively e.g. includes, but not limited to prescription and non-prescription medications and known toxins.

Emergency Conditions: Imminent risk of life-threatening harm to self or others exists, including the use or threatened use of weapons, on the grounds or inside hospital buildings.

Illegal Weapon: Any device used for defensive or offensive combat that is not authorized by law e.g. includes but not limited to guns, knives, and weapons of the martial arts.

Illegal Substances: Any chemical that is not authorized by law (e.g. includes but not limited to street drugs, pepper sprays and maces).

Reasonable Grounds: A belief that the degree of risk of harm to self or others warrants a search of the person's apparel, their property and environment. This belief is based on reasonable evidence such as patient or others' report, known history, and the judgment of a registered health professional, in whose opinion a search would not be considered extreme or excessive.

Search: The process of viewing the possessions, clothing/apparel including, but not exclusive to pocket contents. The search will be carried out by two persons; a registered health professional with another registered health care professional or a member of Security staff or police officer, for the purpose of identifying and removing materials which could be used to harm one's self or others when such a risk exists.

Procedure(s):

1. Confirm with the police who accompany a patient (if applicable) that a search has been conducted. Document this information in the patient's health record. Another search is not required without additional/new concerns arising.

2. All patients/family and visitors will be informed on admission and as required what constitutes contraband or restricted items and the rationale for the storage or disposal of these items. A written list will be posted on the unit for patients and visitors to view.
3. If a search by police was not conducted or if an additional or new concerns arise the patient /SDM will be asked for verbal consent to do a search, which will be documented in the health record. This will include the reason for the search and what the search entails. Any concerns expressed prior to the search will also be documented.
4. All searches require the presence of **two** professionals for the duration of the search;
 - A registered health professional and
 - One of the following; police officer, security personnel, other Lakeridge Health staff member.In addition, at least one of the individuals conducting the search must be of the same gender as the patient, unless otherwise requested or agreed to by the patient.

Whenever possible the patient participates in their own search by emptying the contents of their pockets, bags, etc., on a table. If needed, security can be asked to assist with the search using protective equipment such as Kevlar gloves while the registered health professional observes.
5. The search of a patient's belongings and/or environment will be undertaken in the presence of the patient. In unusual circumstances the patient may waive the right to be present. This agreement must be documented in the patient's health record.
6. Patients who are changing into a hospital gown may have their clothing searched by a registered health professional or security personnel in the presence of the patient. The decision to search should be made in consultation with at least one other member of the healthcare team.
7. Dangerous and illegal weapons, as well as dangerous and illegal substances are not permitted in the hospital. Such items will be confiscated and may become a police matter. If the legal status of a seized object is in question, consult with the police.
8. Valuables and items considered restricted on the admitting unit (Appendix A – Restricted Items List for Mental Health Units) will be taken from the patient and sent home with friend/family whenever possible.
9. Valuables/Restricted items remaining in the hospital that cannot be safely locked in the patient's room/locker, nursing station, etc., will be clearly listed on the chart, bagged and labelled with the patient's information and stored in a secure location until discharge.

Refusal to Consent

Voluntary patient or visitor

- When a patient or visitor refuses to allow a search of their belongings, alternative arrangements for the belongings will be made (patient's belongings may be sent home).
- A visitor who is suspected of carrying restricted items and asked to comply with a search but refuses, may be prevented from visiting or asked to leave the hospital.

- The hospital staff may search voluntary patients and/or their belongings, confiscate illegal substances or restricted items, if immediate action is needed to prevent serious bodily harm to themselves or others.
- The patient may agree to be searched by means of the least physically invasive method. In this situation, Security may utilize a wand metal detector if available, to perform the search.
- Refusal by a voluntary patient may also result in a discharge from hospital.
- If discharge is not appropriate based on their clinical presentation, the physician should assess if the patient meets the criteria for involuntary admission.

Involuntary patient

- Involuntary patients are detained under the Mental Health Act
- A search may be required to promote the safety of the patient and should be implemented in the most respectful manner.
- If the patient refuses a search, staff will consult with the interprofessional team and consider strategies to facilitate the search.

Documentation Requirements:

Any search conducted at Lakeridge Health requires clear documentation on the patient's health record including;

1. Rationale for the search (e.g., risk assessment and team consultation as appropriate).
2. Any concerns/needs expressed by the patient/SDM and the care team's plan of action to
3. address them.
4. Patient's/SDM consent or refusal.
5. Search process, including the names and titles of the persons conducting the search.
6. Appropriation of any property and its disposition.

Unit/Room/Area Safety Search:

1. Explain to patients/visitors why you are conducting this search.
2. Look for anything that could pose a safety risk (Appendix A) and safely resolve
3. environmental risks or confiscate the risk items.
4. Open and check each door of all unit areas. All rooms that are locked should be opened,
5. checked inside, and then locked again.
6. Report any unresolved environmental safety issues to Maintenance, Unit Coordinator,
7. Manager and/or Operational Supervisor.
8. Document all actions in the patients' health record.
9. Complete a report in the electronic incident reporting system when applicable.

Patient Complaint(s):

Any patient who believes that a search was conducted without reasonable grounds may be directed to the Office of the Patient Experience for further review.

Management of Illegal Substances on Lakeridge Health Property:

Lakeridge Health has zero tolerance for illegal substances on hospital property, therefore any suspected illegal substances on patients cannot be kept on the hospital grounds.

If a patient is suspected of having illegal substances on them and the police officer sees this; they are able to act under the Criminal Code for illegal possession, arrest the patient and confiscate the materials. Nurses and other staff should not obstruct this process.

- Document in the patient's record what the police officer took (including clothing).
- Do **NOT** remove the substances and lock them up or keep them with the patient's belongings as this would mean that you are now in possession of the illegal substances.

The Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) provides protection for the patient's personal health information, not for property in their possession; therefore, you are not violating patient privacy by disclosing illegal drug possession to the police.

If the police are not present with the patient and you find illegal substances, contact security and ask them to remove the substance. Security will contact the police and ask them to pick up the substance. The substance should be delivered to the police **without disclosing** from where/whom the substance came.

Appendix A: Restricted Items List for Mental Health Units

Please note, this is a **general list of items that may be seen/brought by patients/visitors to hospital. This is not an exhaustive list** and differences may exist between areas depending on the level of patient acuity. Decisions regarding access to items should be clearly documented in the patient plan of care.

Patient personal belongings/items can fall within three categories; Restricted, Discretionary and Allowed. All access being granted to discretionary and allowed items should only be done following an assessment of the patient and the environment to ensure any potential risk with its use is considered.

Personal Items List:

- All items will be searched before patient use and are subject to being sent home or to security at the team's discretion based on an assessment which resulted in a concern for safety, including unit safety and the safety of others

Item Type	Definition	Item List and Examples
Restricted	<p>These items are <u>not allowed</u> in a person's possession at anytime while on the unit and will be sent home, or securely stored until discharge.</p> <p>*Some items may be used if closely supervised by staff, or when on privileges.</p>	<p>Sharps (*razors, knives, pins, *scissors) Cameras *Items Requiring Electrical Cords, Belts, Jewellery, Cans, Glass Bottles, Weapons, Tools, Metal Utensils (in PICU), Alcohol or Cannabis Clothing (high heels, scarfs, belts) *Cigarettes and Lighters</p>
Discretionary	<p>These items may be allowed if there is a clear therapeutic value or no risk is identified with the nurse's assessment of the patient and the unit environment.</p> <p>Not all patients may be given access to these items and access may change at any time depending on the unit milieu.</p>	<p>Writing Material (Pens, Pencil Crayons) Plastic Bottles (for water, pop) Warm Drinks (coffee, tea, hot chocolate) Electronics (cell phones, tablets) Personal Hygiene (mouthwash, single use razors) Clothing (laced shoes, wired bra)</p>
Allowed	<p>These items are generally allowed on the unit unless they pose a risk to patients, visitors, staff or the unit.</p>	<p>Books, E-Reader Slippers, Snacks, Hair and Tooth Brush Toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothpaste) Other personal clothing</p>
Not Listed	<p>Items not listed, <u>may not be allowed</u>. Please ask the staff before having an item brought to MH Inpatient Units that is not already listed as allowed.</p>	

Appendix B: Guidelines for the Search of the Patient, Belongings, Room and Unit

This guideline is in place to ensure the safety of all patients, staff and individuals in Lakeridge Health, while maintaining patient's rights and dignity. The need to initiate a search is considered on an individual basis. When a search is required the following guidelines should be considered.

All Searches:

- Patient's rights as well as cultural and religious practices must be considered before initiating any search
- Patient /SDM will be asked for verbal consent for a search, with an explanation of why it is required.
- Always use gloves when conducting a search. Kevlar gloves are available from security for use, if required. Security should be present for any search requiring Kevlar gloves.
- A minimum of two staff conduct the search-one of which is a registered health professional.
*Search of an individual, requires additional considerations (see below).
- Individuals should be given the opportunity to disclose any hidden or illicit items
- Where possible, any items not permitted should be sent home with family or stored safely for return on discharge
- Document the following in the health record:
 - Rationale for the search (e.g., risk assessment and team consultation as appropriate).
 - Patient's consent or refusal.
 - Any concerns/needs expressed by the patient/SDM and the care team's plan of action to address them.
 - Search process, including the names and titles of the persons conducting the search.
 - Appropriation of any property and its disposition.
- Complete a report in the electronic incident reporting system if appropriate

Additional Steps/Considerations Based on the Type of Search

Search of Person and Belongings:

- One of the two individuals conducting the search must be of the same gender as the patient, unless otherwise requested or agreed to by the patient.

- Whenever possible the patient participates in their own search by:
 - Disclosing any sharps or valuables they have in their possession.
 - Emptying the contents of their pockets, bags, etc. onto a table/bed.

Search of Room/Unit

- Search all areas of the room as appropriate including closets, windowsills, bathroom

- Open and check each door of all unit areas. All rooms that are locked should be opened, checked inside, and then locked again.

- Safely remove any items identified as posing a safety risk.

- Report any unresolved environmental safety issues to Maintenance, Unit Coordinator, Manager and/or Operational Supervisor.