

Updates for residents and families in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities

Issue 4 – July 14, 2020

To keep you informed about the changing information about COVID-19, we'll be preparing this update for residents and families of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities every two weeks.

Many residents in long-term care homes have significant health conditions and are at a much higher risk of developing more severe illness or complications from COVID-19 and are less likely to recover. Equally concerning is the speed at which the virus could spread through a facility if one resident is infected, putting all residents living in the facility at risk. It's for these reasons there continues to be some limitations on visiting long-term care homes and assisted living facilities.

Changes to visiting restrictions

We know this has been a difficult situation for everyone involved. We want to acknowledge the challenges to residents and families of not everyone being able to visit face-to-face at this time. We want to thank the tremendous efforts of our residents and families and health care providers in making personal connections in other ways, such as virtual visits.

On June 30, 2020, the Ministry of Health announced changes to the visiting restrictions for long-term care homes and assisted living facilities. We ask for the patience of residents, families and staff as work to sort out the processes for visiting as most facilities will be starting their visits this week. Due to the requirements for visitations, some facilities will be rotating visits through the different wings or units, which will take some time. To ensure all designated visitors have an opportunity to visit, visitations may not be available frequently.

New visiting guidelines:

- All visits **must** be booked in advance to allow for the visits to be conducted safely. Someone from the facility where you loved one is living will call you to arrange the first visit.
- All visitors will be screened for signs and symptoms of illness, including COVID-19, prior to every visit.
- You will not be able to come and visit if you or the resident you're visiting are sick or have any COVID-19 symptoms.
- When you visit you will need to bring your own mask and wear it for the duration of your visit.
- All visitors will need to wash their hands before and after visiting using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow and do not touch your face.
- Please maintain a physical distance of 2 meters or 2 arm lengths from others and avoid physical greetings (for example, shaking hands, hugging, kissing).

The resident and family councils at each facility will help to oversee the visiting process and suggest improvements where possible. If you're interested in joining the council where your loved one lives, please contact the facility.

Each facility will have dedicated staff to help with the process. For more information, contact the facility where your loved one is living or see the Ministry of Health news release on visitor changes (<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0211-001207>).

Note: If there's a COVID-19 outbreak in a facility, visits including outdoor visitation, personal services, and therapeutic/recreational activities will be stopped.

Changes to personal services and activities

In addition to changes to visitation, personal service providers, including hairdressers, will be able to come into long-term care homes and seniors' assisted living facilities if they have completed a WorkSafeBC safety plan.

Good news stories about long-term care homes and assisted living facilities in Northern Health

- Adult Day Away Program: Supporting Fort Nelson seniors in active aging: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/adult-day-away-program-supporting-fort-nelson-seniors-active-aging>

For reliable information about COVID-19, we recommend:

- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
- The Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus.html>
- The BC Centre for Disease Control: <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Coronavirus-FAQ-English.pdf>

By working together, we can protect your own health, the health of your loved ones, and the health of Northern Health staff members.

- Northern Health COVID-19 Online Clinic & Information Line: **1-844-645-7811**
- BC Govt. COVID-19 Helpline: **1-888-COVID19** or **1-888-268-4319**

Previous updates for residents and families in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities:

- June 1, 2020: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-1.pdf
- June 17, 2020: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-2.pdf
- July 2, 2020: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-3.pdf