

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

Issue 5 – July 30, 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.

Guidelines for bringing games into facilities when visiting

You may request to bring in games (board games, cards, crib, etc.) when you visit your loved one in a long-term care home or an assisted living facility. The recommendations from Northern Health Infection Prevention Control department are:

- Only bring in items that can be wiped down; paper products are very difficult to wipe down effectively so avoid bringing anything made of paper
 - **A note about cards:** If you are bringing in a deck of cards, bring in a new deck and only use this deck with the person you are visiting and no one else. When you leave, wipe the deck down and place the cards back into the plastic bag until you visit again
- **At home:** Wipe down and seal items in a plastic (e.g. Ziploc bag) bag. Disinfect the entire bag(s), including the handle, inside, and outside, with one of the following approved disinfectants: bleach, ammonia based cleaner, alcohol based cleaner, or hydrogen peroxide based cleaner.
- **When you arrive at the facility:** Declare your items. The items will be wiped down again when you arrive at the facility. Once the bag has been disinfected, the visitor may proceed to the resident's room
- **When you leave:** Wipe down and seal all items in a plastic bag, take all your items with you when you leave

Residents and Masks

During social visits, visitors are expected to bring and wear their own masks. Residents do not need to wear a mask. Only residents who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and require urgent medical attention and transfer to an acute care facility should wear a surgical or procedure mask, if tolerated.

Residents with Sensory Deprivation

We aren't able to provide exceptions to the visitation policy at this time for residents with sensory deprivation. Due to the continued concerns of the high risk of COVID-19 to residents living in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities, and our commitment and accountability to follow the guidelines, we need to minimize those risks for both residents and visitors who may be older and/or have underlying health conditions.

We need to collectively work together to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission in these facilities. We recognize that this may result in a lower resident and visitor meaningful social connection/experience

We continue to work to increase the number and frequency of visits in all long-term care homes and seniors assisted living sites in accordance with BCCDC and Ministry of Health guidelines. We know how important visiting your loved one is, and this is a priority for us.

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

- Improving quality of life for dementia patients in long-term care: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/improving-quality-life-dementia-patients-long-term-care>

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
- July 14, 2020: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-4.pdf