

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

Issue 6 – August 12, 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.

Reminder about visitation guidelines

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. There were two new long-term care home facility outbreaks in the province of BC last week. It's for these reasons there continues to be some limitations on visiting long-term care homes and assisted living facilities. We ask for your patience as we work through implementing these new visitation guidelines.

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. We're asking for your help to keep your loved one and the other residents in the facility safe. **It's important to consider that even though you may not have symptoms but through your home, work, and social increased contacts you may be at a higher risk of being exposed to COVID-19. For instance, if you've traveled out of town on vacation, please consider not visiting for the 14-day period of time when you may be at an increased risk to expose your family member to COVID-19.**
- **When you visit you will need to bring your own mask and wear it for the entire time you are visiting.**
- 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).

Bringing pets for visits

If you are the one designated visitor for your family member, and you previously had approval to bring your pet for a visit, you may be able to resume pet visits again as per the Northern Health Pet Policy. Prior to bringing a pet into a facility, they need to be screened by a designated staff member at the facility as residents are using one main room for all visits and some residents may have pet allergies. Please contact the facility first to see if they can accommodate this request.

Resuming in-facility respite and inter-facility transfers

Over the past several months the Ministry of Health implemented a range of measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 in care facilities which included stopping in-facility respite care and suspending

inter-facility transfers between two long term care facilities both inside of Northern Health and from other communities in the province.

Consideration has been given to how to safely restart certain services that have been suspended, recognizing the impact that suspending in-facility respite has had on caregivers and that suspending inter-facility transfers may impact clients waiting to transfer from short-stay beds or to their preferred care homes. In discussion with Health Authorities, the Ministry has determined that in-facility respite care and inter-facility transfers may now resume, assuming appropriate precautions are taken to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

In-facility respite:

- Resuming these services must follow regional Medical Health Officer (MHO) directions (including restricting respite within facilities with active COVID-19 outbreaks).
- All clients being admitted for in-facility respite must adhere to a 14-day isolation requirement (standard precautions - mask, gloves, and eye protection).

Inter-facility transfers:

- Resuming these services must follow regional MHO directions (including restricting transfers between facilities with active COVID-19 outbreaks).
- Precautions (e.g., 14-day isolation) for inter-facility transfers will be at the direction of the MHO based on assessed regional risk.

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
- July 30, 2020: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-5.pdf