

Working to keep everyone safe and healthy

May 1, 2020

To patients, residents and families:

Northern Health is working with provincial and federal partners on surveillance, diagnostic testing and infection control measures for the COVID-19 outbreak. For people infected with COVID-19, there is a wide range in infection severity from no symptoms to severe pneumonia.

Current information suggests that older people with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease are at higher risk of developing more severe illness or complications from COVID-19. Although most people with COVID-19 recover, people with chronic diseases are also at higher risk if they become ill.

As a result, we have changed our visiting guidelines to make sure we're protecting patients, residents, staff, and families. Starting immediately, Northern Health is now allowing only essential visits. Essential visits include, but are not limited to:

- Visits for compassionate care e.g. end of life and critical illness
- Visits considered paramount to patient/client and well being, such as assistance with feeding or mobility and
- Existing registered volunteers providing services as described above only.

Decisions related to visitor guidelines are based on direction provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada and provincial public health bodies.

Health officials tell us that frequent hand-washing with soap and warm water remains the best defense against the spread of respiratory illnesses. You can also limit the spread of illness by following these other simple practices:

- Avoid touching your face
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow
- If you use a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible, then wash your hands

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**