

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

Issue 13 – December 11, 2020

To keep you informed about the changing information about COVID-19 and other information, we're producing this update for residents and families of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities twice per month.

## **The provincial guidelines for social gatherings are in place until January 8, 2020. Are you familiar with them? Read these guidelines to keep your loved ones safe.**

We understand the holidays are an important time to spend with family members who are in a long-term care home or assisted living facility. We ask you to seriously consider the provincial guidelines on social gatherings (<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/social-interactions>) if you're thinking about taking your loved one out of the facility. We know this is a difficult time to be away from your loved one, but there are some alternatives to visit with your loved one:

- The one designated visitor can visit and bring gifts from the family
- Virtual visits or phone calls can be arranged

### **Gather only with your household or core bubble**

No social gatherings of **any size** at your residence with anyone other than your household or core bubble. For example:

- Do not invite friends or extended family to your household
- Do not host gathering outdoors
- Do not gather in your backyard
- Do not have playdates for children

### **Core bubble**

For most people, their core bubble is their immediate household. An immediate household is a group of people who live in the same dwelling. For example:

- If you have a rental suite in your home, the suite is a separate household
- If you live in an apartment or house with roommates, you are all members of the same household

For others, including people who live alone, their core bubble may also contain a partner, relative, friend or co-parent who lives in a different household. This should be a maximum of two people outside of those living in your immediate household.

## **Bringing gifts and food into the facility**

Please coordinate gift drop-off with the long-term care resident's designated visitor. Designated visitors should call ahead, and discuss with the site visitation clerk/screener to limit the number of people dropping off gifts at one time.

- Safety protocol should be followed when packing/wrapping any gifts including hand hygiene and using bags/containers that can be wiped down before distribution.
- It's unlikely that gift wrap can transfer the COVID-19 virus

## Bringing food and drinks to family members

Family members can bring food and drinks into facilities for their loved ones as long as they follow the Bringing Food to Families guidelines:

[https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern\\_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/bringing-food-to-family.pdf](https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/bringing-food-to-family.pdf)

Some homemade and store-bought treats and meals are safe to bring into a health care facility, but others present a risk and require care and attention. It is important that the food you bring in doesn't:

- Increase the risk of food poisoning
- Conflict with special diet considerations (e.g. allergies, celiac, diabetes, etc.)
- Increase the risk of choking hazard (e.g. swallowing difficulties)

It's important that the designated visitor DOES NOT share food during visits as they need to wear their mask at all times. Family members need to check in with their facility staff prior to bringing in any food.

## Christmas decorations

You'll start to see some of your facilities are being decorated for the holidays! Decorations don't increase the risk for spread of COVID-19. Staff members are following infection control guidelines to continue to keep residents safe and spread the holiday cheer.

## Outbreak guidelines in long-term care homes

Northern Health has an in-depth and detailed outbreak plan to respond to any potential outbreaks in our long-term care homes. This outbreak manual has been valuable during our recent outbreak at Rotary Manor in Dawson Creek.

This guideline was developed to help Northern Health long-term care homes to prepare, detect and respond to cases of COVID-19 in their facilities. Managing a COVID-19 outbreak can be challenging. This guideline ensures that during an outbreak the risk of transmission/passing the virus to other residents, as well as staff members, is reduced.

In addition, the outbreak guidelines provide a guidance on outbreak prevention and detection, increased resident symptom screening, and enhanced environmental cleaning, testing, and special care of resident(s).

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

- Local artist completes mural at Vanderhoof's Stuart Nechako Manor long-term care home: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/local-artist-completes-mural-vanderhoofs-stuart-nechako-manor-long-term-care-home>

## 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:

- October 7, 2020: [https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern\\_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-9.pdf](https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-9.pdf)
- October 27, 2020: [https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern\\_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-10.pdf](https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-10.pdf)
- November 16, 2020: [https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern\\_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-11.pdf](https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-11.pdf)
- November 24, 2020: [https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern\\_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-12.pdf](https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-12.pdf)