

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

Issue 20 – March 31, 2021

We continue in our commitment to keep you informed about the changing information about COVID-19 and other information by producing this update for residents and families of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities twice per month.

Update on visiting restrictions – effective April 1, 2021

Protecting those most vulnerable to severe illness is a priority and Phase 1 of BC's COVID-19 Immunization Plan immunized:

- Residents and staff in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities
- Essential visitors
- Individuals assessed for and waiting to move into a long-term care home

With this added layer of protection of the immunization, and recognizing the impact on residents and families, it is an appropriate time to ease visitor restrictions and support more safe social connections in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities.

Changes

The province is implementing the following changes to social visits effective April 1, 2021:

- All residents can have regular, frequent, and routine opportunities for social visits
- Visits must allow for a minimum of 60 minutes
- Up to two visitors, plus a child, can visit at one time
- Visits are not required to be limited to the same two visitors at each visit
- A visitor list will be maintained to manage social visits and allow for contact tracing if necessary
- Family and friends can visit in a resident's room without being monitored
- Physical touch can occur between the visitor and resident as long as appropriate infection prevention control measures are followed (visitors must wear a medical mask and perform hand washing)

To support resident social and emotional connection, the following changes will be implemented:

- Removing physical distancing requirements between residents
- Resume communal dining and small group social or recreational activities for residents, within a facility unit or floor
- Supporting residents to go on outings with no requirements for isolation upon return to the facility
- Removing requirement for 14 day isolation for new facility admissions and providing immunizations if needed

Other practice requirements for social visitation remain in place, including:

- Social visits will continue to require advance booking, screening of visitors for COVID-19 symptoms, use of medical masks, and practicing frequent hand washing
- Social visitation will continue to be suspended during a facility outbreak
- The essential visitor policy has not changed and remains in place
- The appeals process through the Patient Care Quality Office for essential and social visits remains in place

For more information, see: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Visitors_Long-Term_Care_Seniors_Assisted_Living.pdf

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 Virtual Clinic: **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:

- February 23, 2021: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-17.pdf
- March 10, 2021: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-18.pdf
- March 25, 2021: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-19.pdf