

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

Issue 21 – April 16, 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. 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 and assisted living

With this added layer of protection through immunizations, and recognizing the impact of COVID-19 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 implemented 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 as requested
- 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. It is important that visitors do not linger in communal spaces, at team stations or interact with other residents and proceed directly to the resident's room when they arrive.
- 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 have been implemented:

- Removing physical distancing requirements between residents
- Pet visits can be accommodated in private rooms
- 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 prior to the visit at the entrance of the facility, use of medical masks, and practicing frequent hand washing.** This is important to remember as this practice continues

 to protect loved ones in facilities.

- 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

Advance Care Planning Day is April 16

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how unpredictable life can be. No one really knows what tomorrow will bring. Many people write a will or plan their funerals in advance so that family members know their wishes. But few people think about what would happen if they had a serious illness one day that left them unable to make health care decisions.

If you are seriously ill and in need of health care, but are incapable of making your own decisions, do your close family members, or friends know your wishes for health care? Do they know what medical procedure you would agree to, or refuse? By planning in advance your health care team, family, and loved ones are better able to ensure wishes are understood and met in the event of a medical crisis. Advance care planning is something every adult should be engaging in and is best done when you are healthy and before a crisis occurs.

On April 16, 2021, all Canadians are encouraged to spend time thinking about and talking about their wishes and values between 6 and 8pm with family, friends and loved ones.

Learn more by visiting advancecareplanning.ca and northernhealth.ca

Antipsychotic Reduction Initiative

The elder services program is undertaking an exciting new initiative. The focus of the initiative is to improve the quality of life for residents with dementia by reducing or discontinuing their antipsychotics through thoughtful assessment and non-pharmacological approaches. The initiative places emphasis on maintaining and increasing the resident's independence by employing DementiAbility practices while maintaining a focus on resident safety by monitoring and employing methods to decrease the risk of falls.

This initiative is starting in five long-term care homes and will be carried out to the remaining care homes across Northern Health over the next few years.

What is DementiAbility™?

DementiAbility focuses on creating environments that support the needs, interests, skills/strengths and abilities of individuals with dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment.

Why would we be reducing antipsychotics?

Antipsychotics can be useful tools to help enhance quality of life for those experiencing symptoms of dementia, however they can also have side effects, and interactions with other medications that may be harmful to a resident's health and may decrease their quality of life. Some antipsychotics can be

reduced, discontinued, or replaced with another medication or a change in routine could be explored. This option may have less side effects and health implications, or ideally, no side effects at all.

If we have identified a medication that may be able to be discontinued or reduced, a care team will determine a strategy to maintain or enhance the quality of life for your loved one as we reduce and/or discontinue their medication. Sometimes this may take several weeks or months. **Medications are only changed in consultation with your family doctor and pharmacist.**

How can you help with this work?

Your involvement as a care partner greatly enhances our ability to provide the best quality of life for your loved one. The more we understand who they are, and what is important to them, the better we will be able to develop care strategies in order to provide them the best care possible. Stay tuned for further information on how you can be involved in this work in future editions of this digest.

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:

- 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
- March 31, 2021: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-20.pdf