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| Date: | September 4, 2020 |
| To: | Northern Health Physicians |
| From: | Aaron Bond, Executive Lead, Elder Program; Dr. Dick Raymond, Medical Lead, Elder Program; Angela De Smit, Executive Sponsor for the NH EOC LTC/AL Task Group |
| Re: | Visitation in long-term care homes, assisted living facilities, and acute care |

We appreciate and understand that family physicians are placed in a difficult situation in meeting the resident/patient/family expectations regarding visitation with their loved ones who are in our facilities. We have observed that visitation has become an emotional and stressful topic for some as a result of the length of time that some family members have not been able to visit face-to-face with their family member.

On June 30, 2020 the Ministry of Health (MoH) [updated the visitation guidelines](#) for residents in long-term care homes (LTCH) and assisted living (AL) facilities, however, **no changes** were made to the visitor guidelines for acute care, including ALC patients. Visiting in acute care is still limited to essential visitors only. We continue to request you to be vigilant with these visitation guidelines.

Under these new guidelines, LTCH/AL residents are able to visit with **one designated** family member or friend. The MoH stated they will be reviewing these guidelines again in the coming months to determine whether the policy can be expanded safely to include other family members or friends going forward. The guidelines support visits between family members and residents of long-term care homes and seniors' assisted living facilities while protecting vulnerable residents.

We would like to encourage that family physicians support the direction to continue to restrict visitors and follow the visitation guidelines in LTCH, AL and acute care facilities. We want to reassure physicians that LTCH, AL and some acute care facilities continue to also provide virtual and essential visits (under the guidelines). If a physician would like to request an exemption for consideration to the current visitation guidelines on an individual basis, the physician first needs to contact the facility management staff directly to discuss this matter prior to discussing any recommended changes with the resident or family member.

See the [visiting guidelines](#) on the physician's website for more information.

Background: (Sent on July 30, 2020 in [Medical Staff Digest](#))

Visitation for ALC patients in acute care

On June 30, 2020, the Ministry of Health announced [updates](#) to the essential visitor policy in long-term care homes and seniors assisted living facilities. The change in policy is specific to long-term care homes and seniors assisted living facilities.

At this time, visitation for patients designated as alternate level of care (ALC) in acute care is still limited to [essential visits](#) only. Northern Health remains in on-going discussions with the Ministry of Health and will communicate any changes to visitation policies as appropriate.