

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

Issue 14 – January 11, 2021

Happy New Year! 2020 was a difficult year for all of us. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we're living our lives and we recognize the challenges faced by the families of, and the residents living in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities.

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.

## Updates to the long-term care and seniors' assisted living visitor policy

The Ministry of Health has updated their policy document about visitation in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities.

Updates include:

- Clarity on an essential visit versus a social visit.
- Clarification that end-of-life visits allow for more than one visitor at a time.
- In alignment with the Ministry of Health's Mask Use in Health Care Facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic policy ([http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/Mask\\_Use\\_Health\\_Care\\_Facilities.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/Mask_Use_Health_Care_Facilities.pdf)), all staff and visitors to long-term care homes and assisted living facilities are now required to wear a medical mask.
- To ensure fair and consistent decision-making, the guidance also includes details on how health authorities and facility operators can ensure public access to clear information regarding a new complaints process and mechanism for appealing decisions regarding visitor status.

## Essential and Social Visits

Essential visits are linked with an essential need that could not be met without the essential visit. Facility staff will determine if a visit is essential.

An essential visit includes:

- Visits for compassionate care, including critical illness, palliative care, hospice care, end of life, and medical assistance in dying
- Visits paramount to the resident's physical care and mental well-being (e.g., assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care or communication, assistance by designated representatives for persons with disabilities)
- Visits for supported decision-making
- Existing registered volunteers providing the services described above
- Visits required to move belongings in/out of a resident's room
- Police, correctional officers and peace officers accompanying a resident for security reasons.

Essential visits shall be limited to one visitor per resident within the facility at a time (except in the case of palliative/end-of-life care). An essential visit is not a social visit and essential visits are permitted in a care home/residence that has an active COVID-19 outbreak, under guidance and direction from the local medical health officer.

A social visit includes:

- Someone not involved in the resident's health-care or support needs
- Someone whose time with the resident is discretionary and usually temporary
- Visiting for purposes that are more social in nature

Not every situation can be anticipated or addressed in detail. Where there is uncertainty, individuals are encouraged to employ cultural safety and humility, and take a person and family-centred approach that appropriately balances risk of transmission.

Virtual options for visiting will be supported as much as possible. Visitor restrictions do not apply to key administrative staff entering for purposes related to facility operations.

For more information, review this updated document from the BCCDC: [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Visitors\\_Long-Term\\_Care\\_Seniors\\_Assisted\\_Living.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Visitors_Long-Term_Care_Seniors_Assisted_Living.pdf)

## COVID-19 vaccinations

We are excited to share that we are receiving the COVID-19 vaccine throughout the month of January and we now have the ability to transport the vaccine short distances off site. We're rolling out the vaccine in accordance with the priority population vaccine groups determined by the BC Ministry of Health, beginning with residents of long-term care and assisted living and their essential visitors, health care workers working in long-term care and assisted living and high-risk areas in the hospital, and remote First Nations communities.

In the coming weeks we will be deploying vaccine to many long-term care homes and assisted living facilities across Northern Health. In anticipation of this, we're encouraging each facility to begin the process of getting consent for residents who are not able to consent for themselves. Loved ones of those in long-term care homes may be contacted soon to be asked about consent for the resident to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. There has been a large immunization campaign in Prince George this past week. A lot of preparation work was done as well as 'getting needles in arms.' There is more vaccine expected to arrive in Northern Health in February and March and will be opportunities for you or your loved one to receive their immunization at that time. We want to reassure everyone that the vaccine is safe and effective.

Visit the BCCDC website for more information on the COVID-19 vaccine: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>

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

- White board advice: Messages for the younger generations: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/white-board-advice-messages-younger-generations>

- Health Care Aides: The eyes and ears of care: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/health-care-aides-eyes-and-ears-care>
- Medical students supporting older adults: Combating isolation during COVID-19: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/medical-students-supporting-older-adults-combating-isolation-during-covid-19>
- Northern Health administers first COVID-19 vaccines in Prince George: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/northern-health-administers-first-covid-19-vaccines-prince-george>
- Terrace administers its first COVID-19 vaccines: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/terrace-administers-its-first-covid-19-vaccines>
- Fort St. John administers its first COVID-19 vaccines: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/fort-st-john-administers-its-first-covid-19-vaccines>

**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:

- 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)
- December 17, 2020: [https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern\\_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-13.pdf](https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-13.pdf)