

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

Issue 15 – January 27, 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.

Changes to the visitor policy – summary of changes

On January 7, 2021, the Ministry of Health updated their guidance document (http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Visitors_Long-Term_Care_Seniors_Assisted_Living.pdf) on visitor changes in long-term care and assisted living, based on recommendations from the Office of the Seniors Advocate.

Changes to note in the document include:

1. Requirement for all staff and visitors to long-term care homes and assisted living facilities to wear a medical mask, 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)
2. Clarification on an essential visit versus a social visit
3. Clarification that end-of-life visits allow for more than one visitor at a time
4. Confirmation that visits are allowed in individual single-occupancy rooms
5. Confirmation that visits do not need to be monitored (sites are still required to provide oversight and monitoring for pre-screening, screening on arrival, providing information about infection prevention control for the visit, and to ensure visitors go directly to the resident they are visiting and exit the facility directly after their visit)
6. Details to ensure fair and consistent decision-making on how health authorities and facility operators can ensure public access to clear information about a new complaints process and how to appeal decisions about visitor status.

COVID-19 vaccinations

We are excited to share we are receiving the COVID-19 vaccine throughout the month of January and 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. See the BC vaccine schedule for more information:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/vaccines>

In the coming week we will finish delivering the vaccine in all long-term care homes and assisted living facilities across Northern Health. More of the vaccine is expected to arrive in Northern Health in February and March. In the coming months, the focus for delivering the vaccine is for seniors over the age of 80, Indigenous seniors over the age of 65 and Elders, hospital staff, family doctors, and specialists, vulnerable populations in select settings, and staff in community home support and

nursing for seniors. Over the coming months, you'll be hearing more about when and where it will be available. 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>

Visit the Northern Health vaccine page for more information on our weekly plan: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/covid-19-vaccine-plan#weekly-plan>

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

- Two long-term care beds added earlier this year to Rotary Manor: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/two-long-term-care-beds-added-earlier-year-rotary-manor>

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 24, 2020: 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
- January 11, 2021: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-14.pdf