

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

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This update is for residents and families of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities. Northern Health is committed to keeping you informed about COVID-19 and other important health matters.

New long-term care visitor restrictions announced January 4

The Public Health Officer and Ministry of Health announced new visitor restrictions on January 4, 2022. In addition to essential visitors, each long-term care resident can have **one** designated social visitor. This can start once rapid point of care (POC) COVID-19 testing is implemented. We expect that all Northern Health long-term care homes will begin testing by January 10, however, some sites may be ready by January 7. Please speak to staff to find out when social visits are expected to start at your facility. The Order will remain in place until it's lifted by the Provincial Health Officer. It was put in place due to the increased transmissibility of the Omicron COVID-19 variant. Residents in long-term care homes are more vulnerable, even when fully vaccinated for COVID-19.

What is an essential visit, an essential visitor, and a social visitor?

Essential visits include visitors that support the care needs of their loved ones (e.g., assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care or communication). For example:

- Visits for compassionate reasons (e.g., critical illness, palliative care, hospice care)
- Visits for supported decision-making
- Visits required to move belongings in/out of a resident's room

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

This restriction **does not** apply to assisted living or multi-level care facilities at this time. Please contact your long-term care home to find out if you qualify as an essential visitor or for any further questions you may have.

For more information on essential visits: <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Visitors Long-Term Care Seniors Assisted Living.pdf>

Visitor requirements for long-term care homes and assisted living facilities

On December 21, 2021, the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Health announced additional safety measures to keep your loved ones safe. To further protect residents in long-term care homes, rapid POC COVID-19 testing will be required for all visitors (including essential visitors) over the age of 12. We expect that all Northern Health long-term care homes will begin testing by January 6.

Proof of negative rapid POC test and personal health number is required for all visitors

- Testing is required for all visitors to long-term care homes over 12 years of age.
- Testing is **not** required for visitors at assisted living facilities at this time.

- Tests will be administered by screeners at the entrance, who are trained health care workers or designated and trained facility staff.
- Visitors are required to test even when attending onsite outdoor events.
- Visitors are required to provide their personal health number (located on your BC Services Card).

Proof of full COVID-19 vaccination is required for all visitors

All visitors must show proof of full vaccination before visiting a long-term care or assisted living facility. However, there are a few exemptions to keep in mind:

- Children under 12 years of age
- Those with approved medical exemptions
- End-of-life visits

Safety precautions like visitor health screening, hand hygiene, and physical distancing will continue. Medical-grade masks are required at all times for all visitors over the age of five. For more information about POC tests, visit the BCCDC website: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID-19_Tests/POC_screening/PoC-testing-clients.pdf

COVID-19 resources

For reliable information about COVID-19, we recommend:

- Northern Health COVID-19 information: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/covid-19-information#trusted-info#northern-health>
- 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 health, the health of your loved ones, and the health of Northern Health staff members. The following contacts are available for additional support:

- Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care 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:

- October, 2021: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-31.pdf
- December 3, 2021: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-32.pdf
- December 24, 2021: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-33.pdf

Good news stories about long-term care homes and assisted living facilities:

- New bathtubs for residents of Acropolis Manor: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/new-bathtubs-residents-acropolis-manor>