

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 (LTC) homes and assisted living (AL) facilities. Northern Health is committed to keeping you informed about COVID-19 and other important health matters.

Heat and wildfire planning

The summer heat is coming soon and our care team wants to make sure you stay safe this season. Heat waves can come with little warning and last multiple days. NH staff are involved in hot weather and wildfire planning to ensure your loved ones are safe and cool this season. We want to assure you of the actions taking place to support residents and staff in our facilities in the event of a heat warning (i.e., temperatures are very hot and there is a moderate public health risk), an extreme heat emergency (i.e., temperatures are dangerous and there is a very high public health risk), or a nearby wildfire. Planning activities include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing care homes for air conditioning and determining coolest parts of the home
- Regular measurement of indoor temperatures
- Offering hydration centres
- Training staff to regularly assess residents for dehydration and heat-related illness
- Reducing time outdoors when air quality is poor

Visit the BCCDC website for tips on how to stay safe this summer:

- Preparing for heat events: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/preparing-for-heat-events>
- Wildfire smoke: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/wildfire-smoke>

Spring/summer social events and gatherings

To celebrate special events this summer, some sites may host special outdoor events! Family and friends participating in outdoor events will still be required to undergo visitor screening and will be asked to follow all COVID-19 safety precautions (see the section below), including wearing a medical-grade mask in common areas. As per Ministry of Health guidelines, visitors may not participate in large indoor events/gatherings (e.g., special, social events like facility-wide celebrations) at this time. Individual gatherings within single occupancy rooms are allowed. If you have questions about visitation and events at your facility, speak to staff for more information.

COVID-19 safety precautions are still in place for visitors to LTC & AL

Most visitor guidelines are in place at NH LTC homes and seniors' AL facilities. Screeners for COVID-19 will no longer ask you if you've travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days. **However, all other safety precautions like visitor health screening, proof of vaccination, hand hygiene, masking, and physical distancing will continue in LTC and AL.** Medical-grade masks must be worn at all times by visitors in all common areas. Fully vaccinated visitors may remove their masks if they are visiting a resident in a single occupancy room in LTC or AL. Rapid point-of-care testing for COVID-19 is still in place for all visitors to LTC homes over the age of 12. Exceptions for end-of-life situations are in place.

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**

Past updates for residents and families in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities:

- March 2022: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-36.pdf
- April, 2022: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-37.pdf

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

- What's in your COVID-19 toolkit? Vaccination is your best protection: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/whats-your-covid-19-toolkit-vaccination-your-best-protection>
- June is Men's Mental Health Month: We check in with six Northern men: <https://stories.northernhealth.ca/stories/june-mens-mental-health-month-we-check-six-northern-men>