

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

Issue 9 – October 7, 2020

To keep you informed about the changing information about COVID-19, we'll be preparing this update for residents and families of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities twice per month.

Update on in-person and virtual visits

There are 24 long-term care homes across Northern Health and 19 assisted living facilities. Across all long-term care homes and assisted living facilities, we can provide 1466 visits a week or roughly 209 visits a day. At the beginning of August, prior to implementing the visitation coordinator positions, we were only able to provide 291 visits a week or roughly 42 visits per day, and these were mainly virtual or window visits. Since then, we have created and filled the visitation coordinator positions and increased visits to include scheduled in-person visits with the one designated visitor and maintained our virtual and window visits.

Outdoor and window visits

As the weather gets colder, some facilities may not be able to accommodate outdoor and window visits for their residents. The colder weather brings a risk of visitors falling and the facility having to keep the snow cleared from the window areas. Please call the facility where your loved one is staying to see if they'll be continuing with window visits, as the weather gets colder. If they're not, and you're not the one designated visitor for your family member, we're still supporting virtual visits. If they're still supporting window visits, please be sure you dress accordingly as the weather gets colder.

Why are the visits monitored?

Visitation coordinators in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities are there to schedule visits and screen and educate visitors. They ensure resident, visitor, and staff safety by making sure visitors don't enter the facility if they're sick, visitors wash their hands often, practice cough etiquette, facilitate visits (e.g. take residents to designated location), and visitors maintain a safe physical distance of at least two metres between residents and staff wherever possible. Monitoring also allows staff to attend to any resident needs during the visit. These measures are in place to protect residents, family members and staff.

According to the infection prevention and control requirements for COVID-19 in long-term care homes and assisted living facilities, "care homes/residences must be able to safely provide oversight for family/social visits, including adequate staffing to provide pre-screening, screening on arrival, providing information on infection and prevention control for the visit, monitoring the visit, monitoring leaving of the residence." This information is from http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_LongTermCareAssistedLiving.pdf

Northern Health continues to thank you for understanding during this incredibly difficult time.

Fall flu campaign

Discussions have begun with the long-term care homes and assisted living facilities around the flu campaign for this year. Preparations are well under way and most sites are able to implement the same process they've followed in previous years, and do so safely.

The assisted living sites have residents attend one of the local flu clinics in their community, or a NH primary care nurse comes to the home and offers a flu clinic for the residents who wish to have one.

For long-term care homes, either the community pharmacist comes to the home to provide immunizations or one of the nurses on staff provides the immunizations to the residents.

Adult day programs reopening

Adult day programs in the community are slowly reopening. They're required to have safety plans approved and in place and meet specific criteria to ensure the safety of the participants and staff. At this time, only three adult day programs in Northern Health meet the criteria for re-opening and are in the planning stages – Terrace, Fort Nelson, and Masset. Other sites are looking at options for how to support their seniors in the community.

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:

- August 12, 2020: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-6.pdf
- September 3, 2020: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-7.pdf
- September 22, 2020: https://www.northernhealth.ca/sites/northern_health/files/services/home-community-care/documents/long-term-care-assisted-living-digest-8.pdf