

Ministry of  
Long-Term Care

# Update to Visits at Long-Term Care Homes



# Update to Visits at Long-Term Care Homes

## Introduction

On June 10, 2020, the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) issued an update to Directive #3. The update included the first step in the gradual resumption of visits to long-term care homes. To continue to support long-term care residents, the ministry is proposing a further step in reopening homes to visitors guided by the following principles:

- **Safety:** Any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors, and ensure risks are mitigated.
- **Emotional Well-being:** Allowing visitors is intended to support the emotional well-being of residents by reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation.
- **Equitable Access:** All individuals seeking to visit a resident must be given equitable visitation access, consistent with resident preference and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents.
- **Flexibility:** The physical/infrastructure characteristics of the long-term care home, its staffing availability, and the current status of the home with respect to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are all variables to take into account when setting home-specific policies.

Visitors should consider their personal health and susceptibility to the virus in determining whether visiting a long-term care home is appropriate. Where it is not possible or advisable for in-person visits homes should continue to provide virtual visiting options.

As the pandemic situation evolves in Ontario, this direction regarding visits at long-term care homes will be adjusted as necessary, keeping the safety and emotional well-being of residents and staff at the forefront.

This document is being issued to provide updated guidance to long-term care homes and is intended to supplement Directive #3. To the extent that anything in this document conflicts with the Directive, the Directive prevails, and long-term care homes must take all reasonable steps to follow the Directive.

## Home Requirements

The following baseline requirements for the home must be met prior to the home being able to accept any visitors:

1. The long-term care home must **NOT** be currently in outbreak.
  - a) In the event that a home enters into an outbreak, all non-essential visitations must end. Homes must establish compliance with all CMOH directives for homes in outbreak and follow directions from the local Public Health Unit (PHU).
  - b) Essential visits will still be allowed for homes in outbreak and any visitors must qualify under those rules.
  - c) Homes are encouraged to consult with their local PHU as to whether temporary cessation of visits is warranted if there is a steady increase in local community cases of COVID.
  
2. The home has developed procedures for the resumption of visits and a process for communicating these procedures with residents, families, visitors and staff, including but not limited to infection prevention and control (IPAC), scheduling and any setting-specific policies.
  - a) The process must include sharing an information package with visitors on IPAC, masking and other operational procedures such as limiting movement around the home, if applicable, and ensuring visitors' agreement to comply. Home materials must include an approach to dealing with non-adherence to home policies and procedures, including the discontinuation of visits.
  - b) Homes must ensure protocols are in place to maintain the highest of IPAC standards prior to, during and after visits.
  - c) Each home should create and maintain a list of visitors. The list will be available for relevant/appropriate staff members to access.

**Definitions**

**Staff** – those employed by long-term care homes, including agency members

**On-site contractors** – those who provide scheduled contracted services to the home. Examples may include hair-dressing, foot care etc.

**Essential visitors** – as defined in Directive #3 – include a person performing essential support services (e.g., food delivery, inspector, maintenance, or health care services (e.g., phlebotomy)) or a person visiting a very ill or palliative resident.

**Essential caregivers** – individuals who are not staff, essential visitors nor on-site contractors that provide care services to one resident at a home. In many cases, these essential caregivers are family members.

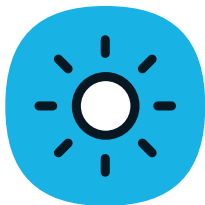
**Visitors** – individuals coming to the home to see a resident who do not fall into another category.

**Visitor Requirements**

3. Prior to each visit, the visitor must:

- a) Pass an active screening questionnaire administered by home staff.
- b) For indoor visits, visitors are required to verbally attest to home staff that they have tested negative for COVID-19 within the previous two weeks and not subsequently tested positive. The home is not responsible for providing the testing. Attestation of testing is not required for outdoor visits.
- c) Comply with long-term care home infection prevention and control (IPAC) protocols, including proper use of face coverings or surgical/procedural masks.
  - (i) Visitors should use a face covering if the visit is outdoors. If the visit is indoors, a surgical/procedure mask must be worn at all times.

- (ii) Visitors are responsible for bringing their own face covering for outside visits. The home is responsible for supplying surgical/procedure masks to indoor visitors and to outdoor visitors who do not have a face covering. Homes should avoid accessing the provincial pandemic stockpile for this purpose.
- (iii) Any non-adherence to these rules will be the basis for discontinuation of visits.

**Outdoor Visiting  
+ Indoor Visiting****Type of Visit: Outdoor****Effective Date:** Immediately, July 15, 2020**Number of Visitors\* Allowed:** Up to 2 visitors a time.**Scheduling of Visits Required:**

Homes should establish practices that:

1. Provide meaningful and equitable access to visits for all residents; and,
2. Consider the staffing and space capacity available to the home to maintain safety of residents, staff and visitors.

Homes will have discretion in scheduling and must take into account the directives in place at the time and whether the visitor is an essential caregiver (e.g. supports with feeding etc.)

Homes may regulate the number of visitors to the home at any one time.

**Type of Visit: Indoor****Effective Date:** One week post approval, July 22, 2020**Number of Visitors\* Allowed:** Up to 2 visitors a time.**Scheduling of Visits Required:**

Homes should establish practices that:

1. Provide meaningful and equitable access to visits for all residents; and,
2. Consider the staffing and space capacity available to the home to maintain safety of residents, staff and visitors.

Homes will have discretion in scheduling and must take into account the directives in place at the time and whether the visitor is an essential caregiver (e.g. supports with feeding etc.)

Homes may regulate the number of visitors to the home at any one time.

*\* Visitor is defined as any family member, close friend or neighbour*