

COVID-19: Visitor Restrictions in Long-Term Care & Seniors' Assisted Living

Prepared for BC Ministry of Health
July 8, 2021



Stay Informed Via These Resources:
gov.bc.ca/Covid-19 | bccdc.ca | 1-888-COVID19

Symptom Self-Assessment:
covid19.thrive.health



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Background

- Since March 2020, restrictions on visitation and group activities have been in place in Long-Term Care (LTC) and Seniors' Assisted Living (AL) facilities in B.C.
- B.C.'s Immunization plan is progressing well as the number of people vaccinated continues to increase. With this added layer of protection, we continue to see a decline in new cases of COVID-19, hospitalizations and deaths.
- We committed to reviewing the impact of vaccination and are announcing a further easing of visitor restrictions for individuals residing in LTC and AL settings.

Visitation Changes

- Remove the requirement to schedule visits in advance.
- Remove the limit on the number of visitors and allow visitation in alignment with site capacity to support resident needs and well-being.
- Screening of visitors and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) practices such as hand hygiene, use of medical masks and physical distancing remain in place.

Vaccination of Visitors

- Strongly recommended visitors be fully immunized recognizing residents are still vulnerable to COVID-19 even when fully immunized themselves. Visitors will be asked to provide proof of vaccination status.
- Fully immunized visitors are required to wear a medical mask while moving through the facility and in common areas, but are not required to wear a mask while in direct contact with the person they are visiting.
- Visitors who do not demonstrate that they are fully immunized are required to wear a medical mask for the duration of their visit, including when in direct contact with the person they are visiting.

On-going Requirements

- Essential visitor designation and the appeals process for visitation remains in place through the Patient Care Quality Office.
- Visitation will continue to require screening for illness upon entry and tracking of visitors for contact tracing.
- Infection prevention and control measures, such as frequent hand hygiene, physical distancing and mask use, are required.
- Social visitation will continue to be suspended during outbreaks.

Supporting Social & Emotional Connection

- Facility-wide indoor social and recreational events/gatherings may occur involving residents and staff from multiple units/floors of a facility.
- Outdoor social events may resume and include staff, residents and visitors (e.g., summer BBQ) in alignment with the current PHO guidance, while adhering to applicable IPC practices to ensure the safety of all staff, residents and visitors.
- Physical touch can occur between visitor and resident with appropriate IPC measures in place (e.g., hand hygiene)

Adult Day Programs

- Resume all adult day programs (ADP) including those that share space, staff and/or equipment with a long-term care home or assisted living residence.
- Require all clients to be fully vaccinated and to provide proof of vaccination. Individual exceptions require approval of the Medical Health Officer and compliance with mask use and physical distancing requirements.
- Recognizing a period of transition may be needed to achieve opening of all ADP sites, health authorities will work to open all sites by September 2021.

In-Facility Respite

- Resume all in-facility respite including those that are located within a long-term care home.
- Require all clients to be fully vaccinated and to provide proof of vaccination. Individual exceptions require approval of the Medical Health Officer and unvaccinated clients will be required to adhere to 14-day isolation.
- Recognizing that a period of transition may be needed to achieve opening of all in-facility respite beds, health authorities will work to achieve full resumption by September 2021.

Staff and Resident Vaccination

- PHO Order will require all long term care and seniors' assisted living facilities to maintain and provide public health records of the vaccination status of residents, staff, personal service providers and volunteers.
- Staff who are not confirmed to be fully immunized against COVID-19 will be required to wear a mask and undergo regular rapid testing and any follow-up required from that testing.
- Personal service providers and volunteers working in long-term care and seniors' assisted living must be fully immunized.

Single Site Orders

- The Single Site Orders, put in place last spring, prohibit staff from working at multiple long-term care and assisted living sites in order to protect seniors vulnerable to serious illness and death from COVID-19.
- These orders will be amended to allow fully immunized staff to work across a designated cluster of sites.
- The Ministry of Health will work closely with health authorities, unions and operators to work through the details of how best to identify and enable pools of fully immunized staff to move between sites to address staffing challenges.