

# **Key Messages: COVID-19**

## **Personal Care Homes and Community Care Homes**

### **March 23, 2020**

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Provision of care and support in a personal care home or a community care home is a high priority service. Information contained within is intended for home operators and staff to support the safe provision of residential services while protecting yourself. This information will be updated if necessary as conditions related to COVID-19 pandemic unfold.

Please visit <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19> for the most recent and accurate information about COVID-19.

Please visit <https://www.811healthline.ca> for information about the online COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool.

#### **Symptoms of COVID-19**

- Fever or cough or difficulty breathing or aches and pains

#### **Self isolation**

- All personal care home and community care home staff, operators or residents who have recently traveled, been in contact with anyone who has traveled, and/or display symptoms should consult the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador website [www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19](http://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19) regarding the requirement to self-isolate and recommendations for determining if COVID-19 testing is needed.
- Residential care home staff who are required to self-isolate can return to work after 14 days if you do not have flu-like symptoms. If you develop flu-like symptoms during the 14 day self-isolation period, you will need to consult with Public Health to determine your care plan. The staff and the operator shall cooperate with Public Health in identifying other potential contacts.

#### **Wage Compensation for people who are required to self-isolate**

- On or after March 14, 2020 at 7pm (NDT), anyone traveling outside the country is required to self-isolate. The provincial government will compensate private sector employers, with provision of appropriate documentation, to ensure continuation of pay for employees affected by this decision.
- Anyone travelling outside of the country after March 14, 2020, is doing so against public health advice, and will not be eligible for this compensation.

- Details on the required documentation and processes for reimbursement to private sector employers will be released in the coming days. Employees should retain documents regarding their travel (such as boarding passes) to facilitate reimbursement.
- Please refer to the following link at government website for further details: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2020/exec/0314n02>.

### **Staff presenting with symptoms**

- Staff of a home who start having symptoms, who have traveled; or have been in contact with someone who has traveled; or attended a mass gathering; or been in contact with a person who attended a mass gathering, should not come to work and should complete the COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool which can be found at <https://www.811healthline.ca> and follow directions based on the outcome of the Self-Assessment tool.

### **Residents presenting with symptoms**

- Residential care home staff who are concerned about a resident who may have symptoms of COVID-19 and have traveled or been in contact with someone who has traveled; or attended a mass gathering; or been in contact with someone who attended a mass gathering, should isolate from others as quickly as possible and be helped in completing the COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool, if possible, which can be found at <https://www.811healthline.ca>.
- Staff should advise the regional health authority where there are concerns that a resident may have COVID-19 or influenza-like-illness.

### **Infection Prevention Control Measures in Residential Care Homes**

- Ensure good hand hygiene measures are in place and followed. Staff and residents should wash their hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds. If it is not possible to wash your hands use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol. Ensure hand sanitizer is available throughout the home. Staff are to wash their hands before and after providing care to each resident.
- To the greatest extent possible, practice social distancing and maintain at least a 2 metre (6 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. If hands are contaminated, they can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose and mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and make you sick.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- Avoid sharing household items.

- Wash laundry thoroughly and wear gloves when handling soiled laundry. Perform hand hygiene after gloves are removed.
- For additional information please refer to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador website <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19> or the World Health Organization website <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>.
- Non-essential large group activities should be curtailed, small group activities within the home can still proceed, but remind residents to maximize distance between other residents to the greatest extent possible.
- Non-essential outside appointments should be reduced or eliminated. Exceptions can be considered for extenuating circumstances.
- Discuss with the resident the potential to reschedule non-urgent appointments and minimize the amount of community activity.
- Ensure staff are aware of appropriate cleaning protocols. Ensure high touch areas such as door knobs, bathrooms, common areas, dining rooms, are cleaned more frequently than usual. Ensure the cleaning supplies used are appropriate for the infectious agent, used at the appropriate dilution and the contact time is followed. Please consult your supplier for information and direction. Additional information can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-NL.pdf>

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- Please conserve personal protective equipment and ensure it is stored in a secure space to minimize the risk of theft.
- Surgical masks with face shields are **only** required for a resident with influenza-like illness, or a resident suspected of having COVID-19.
- Ensure staff are educated in appropriate donning and doffing of PPE (see links below).
  - [https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/PPE\\_Putting\\_It\\_On.pdf](https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/PPE_Putting_It_On.pdf)
  - [https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/PPE\\_Taking\\_It\\_Off.pdf](https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/PPE_Taking_It_Off.pdf)
- PPE must be changed between patients.

### **Visitor restrictions**

- As of end of visiting hours on Monday, March 23, 2020, all personal care homes and community care homes shall restrict access to all visitors, with one exception, visiting a resident at end of life. In such cases, family will be notified that visitation is permitted. Staff of the home will ensure measures are in place to minimize risk of infection through use of

personal protective equipment, hand hygiene and social distancing. All people attempting to enter a home will be screened by staff.

- These restrictions will be reviewed regularly.
- Where residents/families are choosing to ignore restrictions in place and put themselves and others at risk, the home has the ability to require a resident to enter quarantine or may result in eviction from the home.
- This is a difficult situation for residents and their families. Therefore, families are encouraged to communicate with their loved one in residential care by phone to explain that they cannot visit. Staff of the homes will assist residents in making contact with family. Families can also call residential care homes regularly for updates on their loved one.
- Residential care homes should also limit access to non-essential visitation in the home, including contractors, visiting sales vendors and others. Fire suppression system service technicians should be allowed entry and the home should support infection prevention and control measures including social distancing, hand hygiene and enhanced cleaning during such visits.
- RHA clinical staff may visit the home to provide urgent, emergent or essential service delivery to residents. In such cases, appropriate infection prevention and control measures will be taken.

#### **Resident absence from the home**

- Residents should be strongly discouraged from going out of the home, except in the most extenuating circumstances, for example visiting family at end of life. In such circumstances, the resident and their escort are given education about infection, prevention and control measures, including use of personal protective equipment, social distancing and hand hygiene. All non-urgent outside appointments should be canceled.
- Where it is necessary for a resident to go out, the resident and escort are advised that where there is a risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 this may result in isolation of the resident upon return to the home or the resident may not be allowed entry into the home.
- Residents should be advised before they leave the home that upon return they will be asked questions about possible contact with COVID-19 cases, and if they had contact with a person who may be at risk of COVID-19 that they may not be permitted back in the home.
- Where residents/families are choosing to ignore restrictions in place and put themselves and others at risk, the home has the ability to require a resident to enter quarantine or may result in eviction from the home.

- Residents who choose to move out of the home to live with family while these restrictions are in place, should be advised that they are required to continue to pay their client contribution. The RHA will continue to pay the subsidy portion for any subsidized resident who chooses to move out of the home on a temporary basis. All other resident benefits will remain unchanged. Residents should be advised that a prolonged absence may be required. The operator shall advise the RHA case manager of residents who move out temporarily.
- As per normal processes, the operator shall advise the RHA of residents who decide to permanently discharge from the home.

### **Resident considerations**

- This is a difficult situation for residents; please ensure they have accurate information regarding COVID-19.
- Residents should be monitored by staff of the home who will provide supportive care as appropriate. If residents or families are finding it difficult to cope or feel anxious, they should be supported to speak with a trained mental health peer supporter by calling the Provincial Warm Line (1-855-753-2560), open 9am to 12 midnight. If residents are experiencing a mental health crisis, call the Mental Health Crisis Line available 24/7 (1-888-737-4668) or use the Crisis Text service by texting 686868. Additional information about the many options to support staff and residents well-being can be found at [bridge the gapp www.bridgethegapp.ca](http://www.bridgethegapp.ca).

### **Visits to Emergency Departments**

- **For medical emergencies call 911.**
- To support appropriate use of emergency departments and to minimize risk of exposure to residents, operators are encouraged to support the resident to complete the Self-Assessment tool on <https://www.811healthline.ca> for COVID-19 infection related questions. Consult a resident's physician for other health matters prior to sending a resident to the emergency department.

### **Admissions to residential care homes**

- Admissions to residential care homes can continue if the person has not been in contact with someone with COVID-19, traveled or been in contact with someone who has traveled; attended a mass gathering; or been in contact with a person who has attended a mass gathering.
- Clients will be asked if they display flu-like symptoms and if so, should not be admitted if they display any symptoms, except under the advice of the MOH.

### **Resident with COVID-19 infection**

- In the event of a positive case of COVID-19, every effort should be made to maintain the privacy of the resident.

- Many cases of COVID-19 are mild and do not require acute care treatment, RHA staff will consult with the operator to ensure the ability to provide safe care to all residents in the event of a positive case.
- Suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 must be immediately reported to the operator and RHA staff.

### **Guidelines for staff caring for a resident who has COVID-19**

- Follow the infection prevention and control guidelines outlined above. Wear personal protective equipment when you have contact with the person's saliva or other body fluids (e.g. blood, sweat, saliva, vomit, urine and feces).
- Take the gloves and mask off right after you provide care and dispose of them in a wastebasket lined with a plastic bag. Take off the gloves first and clean your hands with soap and water before taking off your mask. Clean your hands again with soap and water before touching your face or doing anything else.
- Be careful when touching waste and wash hands thoroughly after emptying the wastebasket.
- For more details for caregivers caring for someone who has COVID-19, please click on the following link:  
<https://www.health.gov.ni.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/coronavirus/healthcareprofessionals/factsheet-covid-19-guide-isolation-caregivers.pdf>.
- Consult your local public health office who will give you special instructions about how to monitor your own health, what to do if you start to feel sick, and how to contact them.
- If you start having symptoms, isolate yourself from others as quickly as possible and complete the COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool available at <https://www.811healthline.ca>.

### **COVID-19 preparedness planning in residential care homes**

- Further information about pandemic preparedness planning will be available from the RHAs in the coming days.