

VISITOR GUIDELINES (BC)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the health and safety of residents, families, team members, and visitors remains our top priority. The presence of family and friends is important to the emotional wellbeing of residents, and we recognize the importance of in-person visits. The following guidelines will support safe, physically distanced outdoor and indoor visits for family members and friends to visit and engage with their loved ones.

As per provincial mandate, all visitors to show proof of full vaccination to enter a care community (excluding children under 12 years or those with an approved medical exemption issued by the Provincial Health Officer and those visiting due to end of life care reasons).

Fully immunized is defined as 7 days after a single dose of a COVID-19 vaccine like Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) or having a second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series such as Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, or approved combination of COVID-19 vaccines.

Medical Deferral Form – a form for visitors of healthcare facilities, including LTC and seniors' AL facilities, who do not have proof of vaccination. The medical deferral form will be presented in order for the visitor to be granted entry with exceptions as outlined in the form. See link:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/forms/2372fil.pdf>

Point of Care Testing

Point-of-care (POC) test kits are devices that can be used to rapidly test for COVID-19 infections. POC tests are portable, rapid, and provide results at the point of testing, usually within 15 to 20 minutes.

All visitors, excluding children under the age of 12 years are required to undergo rapid point of care testing within 48 hours of the visit and when visiting for end of life purposes. Rapid antigen testing may be done at the site as part of the screening process or in the community prior to the visit. Regular and frequent visitors will undergo rapid antigen testing three times within one week.

If the rapid test result is positive, the visitor must not enter the care community and is strongly recommended to have a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test through public health.

Note, if individuals were previously COVID-19 positive, they are exempted from the COVID-19 testing/rapid antigen screening test if under 90 days from the date of the prior COVID-19 infection, and must show proof of positive test result. When the individual is over 90 days, COVID-19 testing/rapid antigen screening test will resume.

The charts below clarify types of visits and highlight some key requirements in addition to protocols that are in place.

DURING A COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Visit Type	Visit Purpose	How Many Visitors?	Is Visitation Permitted?
Virtual Visits	To connect residents and families from a distance. These connections are enabled by using virtual tools or technologies i.e. Zoom.	No limitations	Yes
Essential visit to provide compassionate care (onsite)	To provide compassionate care, including critical illness, palliative care, hospice care, end of life and medical assistance in dying.	One family or friend at time. * Exceptions for allowing more than one visitor at a time must be approved by care team and documented in care plan	Yes
Essential visit to support the resident's mental or physical wellbeing (onsite)	To support or provide care identified in the care plan that cannot be routinely completed by team members and would potentially harm resident if not permitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal assistance • Assistance with mobility • Assistance with personal care • Communication assistance for persons with hearing, visual, speech, cognitive, intellectual, or memory impairments • Assistance by designated representatives for persons with disabilities, including provision of emotional support • Visits for supported decision making 	One family or friend at a time who can assist with care plan needs	Yes
Single Designated Visits (onsite)	To allow for socialization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits made by a designated family member or friend; may take place indoors (resident room) or outdoors in a designated visiting area • May designate an alternate in the event that the designated visitor is no longer able to visit (e.g. moved, illness or death) • These visits may continue during an outbreak unless directed by the MHO 	One designated visitor	Yes

Visit Type	Visit Purpose	How Many Visitors?	Is Visitation Permitted?
Family/Social Visits (onsite)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits other than essential visits or visits from a single designated visitor • Provide opportunities for residents to spend time with loved ones to support their social, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing, 	Not permitted	No

NO COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Visit Type	Visit Purpose	How Many Visitors?	Is Visitation Permitted?
Virtual Visits	To connect residents and families from a distance. These connections are enabled by using virtual tools or technologies i.e. Zoom. Schedule in advance	No limitations	Yes
Essential visit to provide compassionate care (onsite)	To provide compassionate care, including critical illness, palliative care, hospice care, end of life and medical assistance in dying.	One family or friend at time. * Exceptions for allowing more than one visitor at a time must be approved by care team and documented in care plan	Yes
Essential visit to support the resident's mental or physical wellbeing (onsite)	To support or provide care identified in the care plan that cannot be routinely completed by team members and would potentially harm resident if not permitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal assistance • Assistance with mobility • Assistance with personal care • Communication assistance for persons with hearing, visual, speech, cognitive, intellectual, or memory impairments • Assistance by designated representatives for persons with disabilities, including provision of emotional support • Visits for supported decision making 	One family or friend at a time who can assist with care plan needs	Yes
Single Designated Visits (onsite)	To allow for socialization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits made by a designated family member or friend; may take place indoors (resident 	One designated visitor	Yes

	<p>room) or outdoors in a designated visiting area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May designate an alternate in the event that the designated visitor is no longer able to visit (e.g. moved, illness or death) • Visitor limits may apply based on care community capacity as outline by WorkSafeBC (WSBC)/Public Health Officer (PHO) guidance 		
Family/Social Visits (onsite)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits other than essential visits or visits from a single designated visitor • Provide opportunities for residents to spend time with loved ones to support their social, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing 	Permitted	Yes

Visitor Communication/Protocols

- Provide a letter to family members/residents outlining the guidelines. Communicate to team members around visits and expectations. Share the Family/Visits Guidelines documents.
- Communicate rapid antigen testing requirements as to whether the testing will be completed on site or in the community and any additional resources required to complete the rapid test that the visitor may require if applicable.
- Visitors will be screened for signs and symptoms of illness, including COVID-19, prior to every visit. Visitors who do not show proof of full immunization, present with signs and symptoms of illness, or those in self-isolation or quarantine in accordance with public health directives, shall not be permitted to visit. Exceptions for circumstances related to compassionate care such as end-of-life care will be considered on an individual case by case basis.
- The visitor must conduct hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette procedures, and wear a medical mask if visiting outdoors.
- Conduct an assessment with resident/substitute decision maker for the designation of essential visitors. Use applicable health authority tools provided to document the assessment and retain on the resident health record.
- Visitors are asked to conduct a self-screening prior to visiting and before attending the care community using the BCCDC self-assessment screening tool: <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en>
- PPE (mask) must worn appropriately during in common areas to the designated visiting location. In resident room, medical mask may be removed if the visitor is fully immunized. Outside of the resident room in common areas, areas of multi-occupancy rooms, hallways a medical mask is required. Medical masks are required for indoor/outdoor visits to Long Term Care and Assisted Living. A medical mask will be provided to visitors upon entry to the care community.
- Visitors will complete the required onsite screening and provide proof of being fully immunized against COVID-19 in accordance with the provincial directive timelines indicated above.
- Visitors will be required to undergo rapid antigen testing or show proof of a negative rapid antigen test completed within 48 hours.
- Visitor will proceed to and from the resident room and designated location during the visit, avoid contact with other residents and team members, and will not engage in activities outside of the resident room/designated space in which the visit is occurring.
- Fully immunized visitor may take part in outdoor group activities with their participation in the activity documented on the visitor log.
- No sharing of food or drinks. Please continue to follow the process for dropping items at the main entrance for team members to clean and deliver.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early for rapid testing, screening, review protocol, and await rapid testing results in a designated area until negative test result received.
- Visitation of pets will be determined on a case by case basis to support the wellbeing of the resident.
- Refrain from moving additional furnishing such as chairs from dining and lounge spaces into resident rooms.
- Visitors will conduct hand hygiene using hand sinks or alcohol based hand rub before, during, and after the visit. This is especially important in the case of any physical touch between the visitor and the resident.
- Visitors may bring the resident to a designated outdoor area on the resident's neighbourhood. Maximum occupancy limits for the designated outdoor visiting areas will be posted. Masks must continue to be worn while in common areas at all times, even in outdoor visiting areas on the neighbourhood.

- If a visitor or the resident requires assistance during the in room visit, the visitor is encouraged to use the call bell to alert the clinical team.
- Residents must follow the provincial directives and health authority guidelines when on outings, such as no social gatherings and adhering to infection prevention and control practices.
- Following a positive rapid test, visitors will be allowed to return to visiting the care community once they have completed their required self-isolation period:
 - Fully vaccinated and single designated visitor will be allowed to return after 5 days of isolation and symptoms improve
 - Visitors with documented medical exemptions for vaccination will be allowed to return after 10 days of isolation and the resolution of fever and symptoms improves
- If the visitors test invalid (test does not indicate a positive or negative test result) should take another test. If a valid test result cannot be obtained, the visitor may not enter the care community (unless for compassionate visits related to end of life, where appropriate precautions are employed).

Prior to the Visit

- All visitor entries will be logged using care community/provincial health authority forms during the screening process and vaccination status requested and documented prior to visits.
- Whenever possible, residents residing in multi-bed rooms should receive visitors in a separate, designated location. When a resident is unable to move to a designated visiting area and visiting occurs in a multi-bed room, only visitors for one resident can be in the room at any one time.
- The care community will provide an information package along with education on all required visitation protocols prior to the visit.
- Virtual visits will continue to be scheduled in advance to ensure staffing availability to coordinate the equipment required to conduct the visit. An online social platform may be used to book virtual and social visits. Social visits do not require booking or scheduling in advance. Daily hours when social visits may occur can be set by the care community to allow for adequate staffing with opportunity for visits during the weekday hours and weekend hours.
- All essential visitor requests must be logged, including those that are accepted and those that are denied. The requirements of the essential visitor's log include: First and Last Name, Email, Phone number, Date, Time they arrived, Time they departed.
- The community may establish designated visit times (e.g. Wednesday through Sunday; XX-XX am; XX pm-XX pm).
- Each care community to identify a central point person to coordinate visitors and ensure internal communication and awareness among team members regarding the number of visits occurring at any given time.

Monitoring Visits

Care communities must be able to safely provide oversight for these visits:

- Including adequate staffing to provide pre-screening
- Active screening prior to visit and again upon arrival
- Providing information on IPAC and Sienna protocols for the visit

Signage & Education

The following signage and education will be provided to designated visitor when a visit is booked:

- Hand Hygiene
- Donning and Doffing of Personal Protective Equipment

- Physical Distancing
- How to Wear a Face Mask
- Self-Isolation Dos & Don'ts
- Social Visiting Guidelines for LTC & Assisted Living

Visitor Appeal and Review Process

- See pages 10-11 at link below, which outlines the BC visitor appeal and review process:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>
- COVID-19 Exemption Application, Oct 8, 2021.
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

Reference:

Medical Deferral Form, December 17, 2021:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/forms/2372fil.pdf>

Visitation Table: Essential and Social Visits to Long-Term Care and Assisted Living, January 24, 2022:

https://www.fraserhealth.ca/-/media/Project/FraserHealth/FraserHealth/employees/clinical-resources/coronavirus-information/ltc-al-li/resources2/Visitation/Visitation_Table.pdf?la=en&rev=7f9bc38a91e84add82e1b7d369065b92&hash=6708709B20055DE2C1C97A2C97A7409E44D895AC

Essential Visitor Protocol LTC & AL, June 25, 2020. Available at:

<https://www.fraserhealth.ca/-/media/Project/FraserHealth/FraserHealth/employees/clinical-resources/coronavirus-information/ltc-al-li/resources/Operations/472-Essential-Visit-Protocol---DRAFT-June-25-AM--final-draft.pdf?la=en&hash=6E88F99A06B45AFB517296EEAB8D1F5028AD01E5>

Ministry of Health – Overview of Visitors in Long Term Care and Seniors' Assisted Living, March 18, 2022.

http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Visitors_Long-Term_Care_Seniors_Assisted_Living.pdf