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Visiting Protocols

There is an ongoing need to protect long-term care home residents and staff from the risk of COVID-19, particularly as residents are more susceptible to infection from COVID-19 than the general population due to age and medical condition. The rules for visits continue to be in place to protect the health and safety of residents, staff and visitors, while supporting residents in receiving the care they need and maintaining their emotional well-being.

References:

Directive #3 for Long Term Care Homes under the LTCHA, December 7, 2020

MOLTC COVID-19 Visiting Policy, November 23, 2020

COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open, November 3, 2020

Minister's Directive: COVID-19: Long-Term Home Surveillance Testing and Access to Homes, February 16, 2021

General Visitors

- All indoor visits, by "general visitors" have been discontinued

Essential Caregivers

- Long-Term Care and Retirement residents are encouraged to designate an essential caregiver
- Indoor visits are limited to essential caregivers (one caregiver can visit at a time)

Requirements:

- An essential caregiver must
 - pass active screening
 - have a negative rapid antigen test (as per the rapid antigen testing program)
 - have a negative PCR covid test result within the past 7 days; and not subsequently tested positive
 - attest they have completed the mandatory education (monthly)
 - follow Public Health guidelines in the Home and in the outside community (wear a mask, practice hand hygiene, avoid gatherings and maintains social distancing)

Leaving the Community

- Short stay and temporary absences have been discontinued
- Residents are permitted outside, given they remain on the property and maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from any other person; this will help avoid community contact
- Residents may leave to attend medical appointments; if accompanied by another person, the accompanying person must follow the Public Health infection prevention and control methods:
 - pass active screening
 - may require rapid antigen testing
 - have a negative PCR covid test result within the past 7 days; and not subsequently tested positive
 - both the resident and accompanying person must wear a mask for the duration of the outing (including travel time in the car)
 - practice hand hygiene often

Non-Compliance

- visitors will be provided with information/education about infection prevention and control and covid-19
- visit will be ended if an essential visitor is not complying; re-education/information will be provided; details will be documented
- if circumstances cannot be resolved education, explanation and there is a risk to the health and safety of residents and staff, an essential visitor may be temporarily prohibited from visiting

As the covid-19 pandemic evolves, direction on long-term care home visits will be adjusted, keeping the safety and well-being of residents and staff at the forefront.

As of February 16th, 2021, the Region of Waterloo has been designated a 'red zone' meaning that stringent controls and restrictions have been implemented.

Restrictions include:

- limit close contact to your household (the people you live with) and stay at least 2 metres apart from everyone else
- do not visit any other household or allow visitors in your home
- if you live alone, you can have close contact with only one other household
- only go out for essential reasons, such as: work, school, groceries, pharmacy, health care, helping vulnerable people, exercise and physical activity
- work remotely, where possible

A full list of 'What each zone means' can be found at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/zones-and-restrictions>