

April 10, 2020

COVID19: Increased Testing in LTCH, Holiday Greetings from OARC

Dear residents and long-term care team members,

Several days ago, Premier Ford announced that “**increased testing**” is of IMMEDIATE priority in LTC homes. Many residents, family members and team members have been wondering what that statement meant; how is an increase in testing defined? What can we expect?

On April 8th, our government released two documents that provide guidance and direction to LTC homes in their management of COVID-19. One document helps to define what is meant by “increased testing” and the other is in the form of a Directive that speaks to other aspects of managing COVID-19 and protecting residents and their team members.

1) COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance Update:

This document provides clarification on the level of testing that is to be carried out in LTC homes. To view the full document, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/MOHLTC/202004081UpdatedCMOHDirective3LTCH.pdf>

Highlights include:

- Any resident who is symptomatic, should be tested for COVID-19.
 - Symptoms include:
 - a fever of 37.8 degrees or higher
 - new or worsening respiratory conditions such as cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose or sneezing, nasal congestion, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing
 - evidence of pneumonia
 - For elderly residents, it is prudent to consider ‘atypical’ symptoms which include unexplained fatigue, delirium, falls, acute functional decline, exacerbation of chronic conditions, digestive issues (nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain), chills, headaches, croup

- Residents WITHOUT symptoms (asymptomatic) who live in the same room as a resident who HAS symptoms must be tested immediately, along with the asymptomatic resident
- People transferred from hospital to a long-term care home should be tested PRIOR to the transfer
- When someone has a positive test result for COVID-19, every asymptomatic person who had contact with that confirmed case of COVID-19 must be tested. This includes:
 - ALL RESIDENTS living in adjacent rooms
 - All staff/team members on the unit/neighbourhood where the confirmed case is
 - All essential visitors on the unit/neighbourhood where the confirmed case is
 - Any other people who were in contact with the confirmed case based on a risk assessment by the local public health unit. For example, the public health unit may decide that a resident who shared a table with the person with COVID-19 needs to be tested, or a resident with dementia who wandered into the room of the person who has COVID-19.

2) COVID-19 Directive #3:

The previous “Directive #3” that was issued on March 30 is revoked and replaced by this document. To view the complete document, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/MOHLTC/20200408COVID-19TestingGuidanceUpdate.pdf>

Two highlighted directives are:

- Admission and Re-Admission: immediately, all LTC homes must screen new admissions and re-admissions for symptoms and potential exposure to COVID-19, and all new residents must be placed in self-isolation when they arrive to the home and tested within 14 days for COVID-19.
- Staff Masking: immediately, all LTC homes must insist that ALL STAFF and ESSENTIAL VISITORS wear surgical/procedure masks at ALL TIMES for the DURATION OF FULL SHIFTS or VISITS in the LTC home. During break times, staff members are permitted to remove their masks, but they must remain 2 metres from other staff members (physical distancing).

This applies to all staff members. Example: dietary, housekeeping, laundry, etc.

OARC is pleased with this recent development regarding the increased measures to keep residents and their team members safe from COVID-19. We express our gratitude to the team members who courageously work each and every day to care for and protect residents in LTC homes across Ontario. We will get through this together!

Best Holiday Wishes from OARC

While today and the weekend ahead may look and feel a bit different this year, thank you for giving residents, families and team members a reason to smile. With a little bit of creativity, meaningful connections are happening each day!



Above: OARC's Treasurer Devora enjoyed a virtual Seder dinner with her family from near and far on April 8th. Right: Lanark Heights, Kitchener (submitted for OARC photo contest 2019)

On a daily basis, team members and care partners are greeted at work with hand-crafted signs of support and an outpouring of love and sounds of appreciation. Resident leaders are reaching out to confused peers to offer moments of comfort and laughter. Families and students have made holiday greeting cards and posters to brighten the days of residents, even from outside a window. Team members continue to go the extra mile to ensure vibrant activities are offered and loving care provided despite their own fears or frustrations.

We see you. We thank you. Best wishes for a happy Passover and Easter weekend from our OARC family to yours.