

April 17, 2020

COVID19: Long-Term Care Homes Declared Top Priority

Dear residents and long-term care team members,

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, great attention in our province has been turned towards you, residents living in LTC homes. The Premier has declared that LTC is top priority. In the last day, the government has released a few new directives. I will list them now, with a few highlights from each. Note that a link to the complete document is listed within each description. Also know that your home's management has received these directives and are committed to engaging in whatever means necessary to keep you safe.

1) Guidance for mask use in LTC homes

To view the complete document, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/MOHLTC/20200417GuidanceDocumentMaskUseLTCandRH.pdf>

Highlights include:

- All healthcare workers who interact with residents, or who enter a resident area for any reason (environmental services, dietary aides, recreational staff, etc.) should be provided with a minimum of 2 surgical/procedure masks per day.
- All other workers who do not come into direct contact with residents or residents' space, should be provided a minimum of 1 surgical/procedure mask per day.
- Essential visitors or service providers are expected to provide their own masks, unless there is an arrangement with the LTC home.
- Healthcare workers need to perform a risk assessment of contamination based on their planned interaction with a resident, considering the length of time they are going to be in the resident's environment and the COVID-19 status of the resident.
- Specific guidelines on when a mask should be changed i.e. when working with people with COVID-19, and the residents have been cohorted, the same mask can be used across several resident interactions.
 - A mask must be disposed of if:
 - It becomes visibly soiled

- It comes into contact with a resident and their droplets/secretions
- It becomes very moist such that the integrity becomes compromised
- It is being changed as a part of doffing (removal) of equipment after a resident engagement or care is completed to a cohorted group of people with COVID-19.
- If masks are being reused, the mask must be taken off by the ties or elastics taking care to not touch the front of the mask. Hand hygiene must be performed before and after mask removal and before putting it on again.

2) Long-Term Care Fact Sheet

To view the complete document, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/MOHLTC/20200417GuidanceDocumentLTCHFactSheet.pdf>

Highlights include:

- Procedural definitions of passive and active screening
- Active screening should be done with all residents, twice per day
- All new residents must be placed in isolation under contact and droplet precautions upon admission to the home and tested within the first 14 days of admission.
- Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should not be allowed to enter the LTC home and should go home immediately to self-isolate.
- Residents with symptoms must be isolated in droplet and contact precautions and tested
- Homes must consider a single positive case of COVID-19 in a resident or staff member as a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak
- LTC homes must contact their local public health unit to report a staff member or resident suspected to have COVID-19
- Staff members who test positive for COVID-19 should report their illness to their manager. Return to work is done in consultation with the public health unit and their doctor.
- If a resident tests positive for COVID-19, all surfaces within 2 meters of the resident must be disinfected as soon as possible.

3) COVID-19 Action Plan:

The government released a 3-point action plan to support LTC homes in the prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

To view the complete document click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/MOHLTC/20200417MOH-MLTC-CMOH-OHMemoCOVID-19LTCHActionPlan.pdf>

Highlights include:

- A) Aggressive testing, screening and surveillance:
 - COVID-19 testing for residents and staff has been expanded. Public health units plus additional health sector resources (i.e. hospital staff and paramedics) are being deployed to support additional requirements.
 - Testing of asymptomatic residents and staff in homes across Ontario to undertake broader surveillance activities.
 - A sample of homes that are not in outbreak will be tested to determine the presence of COVID-19 as part of surveillance measures.
- B) Managing outbreaks and spread of COVID-19:
 - Public health units perform risk assessments for all homes
 - Infection prevention and control expertise from across the health sector will be staged and ready to go (regional teams assembled by Ontario Health, teams will be deployed to highest risk homes starting within 48 hours of this release)
 - Training for staff so they know proper infection prevention and control techniques
 - PPE (Personal Protective Equipment): guidance provided on conservation and management of PPE, and distribution of PPE to homes that are in need.
- C) Growing our Heroic LTC workforce:
 - Redeploy healthcare workers from hospitals and home care resources where there are fewer patient volumes
 - Provide emergency funding for infection prevention and containment to homes. This funding can be used to hire additional staff, or for topping up part-time workers to full time workers, etc.

4) COVID-19 Outbreak Guidance for LTC homes

To view the complete document, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/MOHLTC/20200415LTCHOutbreakGuidance.pdf>

This document issued April 15, gives guidance on several areas essential to the management of COVID-19 in LTC homes. Topics include:

- Screening of staff, essential visitors and residents
- Information on use, conservation and storage of personal protective equipment
- What procedures to follow when accepting a new admission
- If a transfer of someone from hospital must occur to an LTC home, the person must be tested for COVID-19, and results received prior to transfer
- Ways to increase physical distancing in LTC homes
- Management of essential visitors
- Testing kits received from LTC homes are prioritized in labs
- Determining who needs to be tested for COVID-19 once an outbreak has been declared
- Procedures to follow if a resident must be transferred to hospital
- Ways for families and residents to stay connected via technology
- Cohorting of staff and residents
- Environmental cleaning procedures
- Communications: homes must keep families, residents and staff informed about COVID-19

5) Hospitals will not transfer people to LTC homes:

To protect residents of LTC homes across Ontario, the government has asked Ontario hospitals to temporarily refrain from sending people to LTC homes. To view the complete document, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/MOHLTC/20200415TemporaryPauseTransitioningPatientstoLTCHandRH.pdf>

Other News to Share:

Discharging a resident during COVID-19:

Some families and residents may be considering having/being discharged from LTC at this time in an effort to avoid the risks of contracting COVID-19 in LTC. This is a very sensitive and emotional decision, and one that has logistical and health implications for the foreseeable weeks and months. OARC does not advise for or against a resident being discharged from their LTC home at this time, but we do encourage you to utilize one or both of these tools, designed to lead you through a thoughtful process, considering the full scope of consequences associated with your decision. It may be right for you and your family, or it may be a decision that cannot be sustained for the duration of the pandemic and beyond (re-admission to LTC will take some time following the pandemic).

- a) Researchers from the Ottawa Hospital, the University of Ottawa, the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, and the National Institute on Ageing (NIA) have developed a tool. To view, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/resources/20200417COVID-MoveFromLongTermCare.pdf>

- b) The National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE) has created a tool. To view, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/resources/20200417UofTNiceCOVID19FamilyCareToolOntario.pdf>

Both tools guide you through aspects of care including:

- Medication
- Safety in transferring/toileting
- Skin integrity
- Equipment needed
- Caregiver care and support
- Food/meal preparation and assistance
- Psychological/emotional care
- Access to medical expertise

Our thoughts continue to be with you during this challenging time. Please let us know how you are doing, and how we can support you in the days and weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

Dee Lender and your OARC team