

TO STAY OR TO GO ?

Moving Family from
Institutional Care to your
Home During the COVID-19
Pandemic

Ontario



NICE

National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly

Initiative nationale pour le soin des personnes âgées

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Ensemble pour le bien-être des aînés

CanAge.

In response to capacity pressures in hospitals the government amended regulations under the *Long-Term Care Homes Act* 2007, March 24, 2020 to:

“Enable current residents to leave a long-term care home if they wish to do so due to COVID-19 and expedite their return to the long-term care home when they need to go back. The resident will be discharged and the bed will then be made available for occupancy by another person.”

The decision to move a family member home during COVID-19 is a difficult and complex one for all involved. When making the right choice for you and your family member, you will need to take into consideration a number of factors and ask yourself some tough questions.

Be sure that the older person is part of the decision, if possible.

The National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE; www.nicenet.ca) in collaboration with CanAge, (www.canage.ca) conducted a rapid review of resident and caregiver needs when considering a temporary move back home of a family member currently living in a long term care facility to assist you in your decision making.

For general information about COVID-19 in Ontario:

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>

For general information about COVID-19 in long term care in Ontario:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-long-term-care>

5 FAST FACTS ABOUT COVID-19 AND MOVING FAMILY FROM INSTITUTIONAL CARE

- 1.** The resident or their substitute decision-maker must submit to the licensee a written request for discharge from the home due to the pandemic.
- 2.** When the pandemic is over, the resident will be placed in the re-admission category or higher for the home they were discharged from.
- 3.** The resident likely cannot go back to their original room or bed.
- 4.** There may not be a bed immediately available for the resident when the COVID-19 crisis is over.
- 5.** Length of time to admission depends on number of vacancies and ability to repopulate homes.

5 FAST FACTS ABOUT RESIDENTS CURRENTLY LIVING IN LONG TERM CARE

- 1.** Close to **40%** of Ontario's long term care residents are monitored for acute medical conditions .
- 2.** Close to **65%** of Ontario's long term care residents manage 10 or more prescriptions.
- 3.** Up to **90%** of Ontario's long term care residents have some form of cognitive impairment.
- 4.** Close to **60%** of individuals require mobility support in the form of a wheelchair.
- 5.** Almost **all** of Ontario's long term care residents have **two or more chronic conditions** (arthritis, heart disease, diabetes) that may increase their COVID-19 risk profile.

What You Need to Know Before Moving a Family Member out of a Long-Term Care Home

Long-term home residents require supervised care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, frequent assistance with activities of daily living, and/or supervision and monitoring. This includes professional health services, personal care, and activities of daily living such as meal preparation, feeding, toileting, laundry and housekeeping.

Important Questions to Think About

COVID-19 Medical Challenges

- What if you or your family member is asymptomatic at discharge time but develops COVID-19 later?
- Do you have the space to isolate your family member, if need be?
- Would there be a danger of infecting other members of your household? Do you have young children at home, people with special needs, someone who is immune-compromised?
- Do you have access to health care if COVID-19 develops in your household, especially in rural areas?
- Will the resident have access to a doctor in the community?
- Can they get their medications without seeing a new doctor?
- If you need homecare, is it available in your area and will you be able to access it?
- Do you have the legal authority to access the resident's plan of care and necessary medical documents from the home? Can you get a copy of those documents?
- Are you prepared if your family member dies while in your home?

Your Home Environment & Equipment

- Are you able to get an occupational therapist to assess your home prior to the resident's discharge?
- Is your family member able to climb the front stairs or walkway?
- If your family member uses assistive devices like walkers etc., do they fit in your house and hallways?
- Is your bathroom accessible (toilet/ shower/sink)? Are there grab bars, raised toilet seats, bath chairs?
- Do you have a hospital-style, or other appropriate bed with accessibility grips for getting in and out?
- Does the family member need help with transfers (bed / toilet / shower/meals)? How many people are required to transfer and how would you do that?
- Do you have space to store the resident's furniture, clothing, pictures and belongings?

Providing Care at Home

- Do you have the ability to obtain and manage the person's medications?
- Will you be able to manage the person's care on your own?
- Are you thinking about publicly funded homecare? Have you spoken to them to find out if it's available at the level you require, and if there is a waiting list?
- Can you manage skin care and skin health to prevent bedsores? Do you have the materials to treat bedsores?
- Can you manage oral care?
- Are you able to manage incontinence and purchase any needed products?

- Has the resident used oxygen at the home and, if so, do you know how to administer it and get new supplies?
- Does the resident have trouble eating or are they at risk of choking on food?
- Can you support required rehabilitation (occupational and physical therapies) at home? Do you know where to get related resources (stretch bands, exercises, etc.)?
- Are you able to support a person with memory loss, self-harming, hitting, wandering, becoming lost or other safety factors secondary to dementia?

Caregiver Supports

- Do other responsibilities (working from home) limit your time commitment?
- Are family members in your home willing to assist you with care?
- If you are relying on other family members, does everyone have a clear understanding of what the expectations are?
- Can siblings, other relatives or friends provide groceries and medications dropped at your door?
- If you have a close friend or confidant, can you stay in regular contact?
- Try to find private time for yourself, because you matter.

Financial Issues

- Can you financially afford to provide care during these times of employment uncertainty and unemployment?
- Prior to going to long-term care, many residents supplemented publicly funded services with private caregivers and extra services. Will you be able to access and pay the extra costs?
- What costs are involved in renovating or retrofitting your home to be able to care for the person? Can you afford it? Are you able to make these changes quickly?
- Do you need to purchase equipment that was previously provided by the home?
- What happens if you go back to work before the person is re-admitted to long-term care? Can you pay for a full time caregiver?

Questions to Ask the Long-Term Care Facility

Part of the decision to leave the home includes reasons for staying. Most facilities are very willing to answer the following questions to help you make your decision.

- Are there any infections and deaths from COVID-19 in the long-term care home?
- Is there COVID-19 testing being done on staff and/or residents? This is an important question because it is one of the best ways to identify carriers and isolate them.
- What are the infection control policies and protocols related to COVID-19? You'll want to know the rules as they currently stand, realizing they may change.

- What are the screening protocols? How often do they occur?
- Does the staff have enough personal protection equipment on all shifts (masks, gowns gloves)?
- Do they have full professional staffing?
- Does the home have oxygen therapy?
- What will happen to older adults who test positive and require medical care not available at the home? Do they go to hospital?
- Is the home having discussions with the residents or their substitute decision-makers to obtain informed consent for treatment or refusal of treatment, or discussing why treatment is not being offered?
- If comfort care is the plan will there be a virtual opportunity to communicate with the resident?
- What are the steps to ensure that close family and friends are given the virtual opportunity to visit if resident is near the end of life?
- What will happen to residents who are hospitalized with the infection but then recover? Will they be permitted to return to the home?

Please remember that change and relocation can have negative effects all their own. Whatever your decision we respect your care and concern.



For more information about this tool, or any of the other tools
and related resources, please visit www.nicenet.ca

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This tool was made by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE) in collaboration with CanAge and The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. We would like to thank them for their support.



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