

May 21, 2021

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Dear Residents and LTC Team Members,

OARC continues to work with the Ministry of Long-Term Care weekly in moving forward solutions and policies to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and related consequences. Today, Erin Hannah, Associate Deputy Minister of Long-Term Care Pandemic Response released a 'good news' development through her memo titled ["Changes for General Visitors."](#)

As of tomorrow, Saturday May 22, 2021, **LTC residents can visit outdoors with up to two general visitors at a time.** Up until now, with wave #3 of the pandemic, and the emergency orders, general visitors have not been permitted; residents could visit with only essential caregivers.

Given the timing of this announcement, we understand that your long-term care (LTC) homes will need some time to create the framework to support safe and effective scheduling and precautionary policies around this new change in the visiting policy. **While it is effective as of tomorrow, we all need to be patient and always keep resident safety at the forefront of our practices.**

With the pleasant warm weather upon us, we are excited for this renewed opportunity to connect residents with more of the people who mean the most to them. While infection protection and control measures are still required, we trust that this easing of visiting restrictions will do your heart and soul well after such a long period of separation!

The memo from Erin Hannah, Associate Deputy Minister of LTC Pandemic Response contains a few specific details pertaining to this new announcement:

- Maximum of 2 general visitors at a time per resident in addition to essential caregiver(s).
  - Children under the age of 2 do not count towards the general visitor maximum

- General visitors:
  - need to be actively screened upon arrival and should not proceed beyond entry points into the LTC home
  - do not need to have a rapid antigen test as their visit will be outdoors
  - need to maintain physical distancing and wear masks
- LTC Homes:
  - Should make efforts to ensure different groups of visitors are physically distanced
  - Permit these outdoor visits in the general vicinity of the home (local parks or parkettes), given that not all homes have suitable outdoor space available

To support LTC home’s quick action towards this imminent change to the [visiting policy](#), a [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) document to support updates to [Directive #3](#) and the [Ministry of Long-Term Care Guidance Document for Long-Term Care Homes](#) was also updated to reflect the changes.

Some of those questions and accompanying answers include the following:

**Q: What is changing?**

A: Starting on May 22, 2021, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ministry of LTC have updated requirements and policies to permit general visitors (usually families and friends) to visit LTC home residents OUTDOORS.

Each resident may have up to 2 general visitors at a time. Essential caregiver(s) can also be present during these visits. Physical distance of 2 metres must be maintained between general visitors and residents. All visitors must wear a mask/face covering that covers their mouth, chin and nose at all times.

**Q: The province is allowing outdoor gatherings of up to 5 people. Why are LTC home residents limited to only 2 general visitors?**

A: This is a next cautious step to further ease restrictions put in place to protect LTC residents and expand opportunities to improve residents’ quality of life. Outdoor visits still need to allow for physical distancing among and between groups. Starting with a limit of 2 general visitors per resident will help homes maximize available outdoor space and schedule as many visits as possible for multiple residents at any given time. The availability of essential caregivers to also be present for these outdoor visits when they choose is not being restricted as they may join over and above the 2 general visitors. Also, the limit of 2 general visitors at a time does not restrict the resident from having multiple different visitors arranged as separate outdoor visits.

**Q: If both essential caregivers come for an outdoor visit, how many are allowed inside the home?**

A: There is no change to this policy. A maximum of 1 caregiver per resident may visit inside the home at a time.

**Q: Can a fully immunized general visitor have close contact with a fully immunized resident?**

A: General visitors must maintain 2 metres physical distance from residents, regardless of immunization status. The ministry is discussing future changes with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Close physical contact between a fully immunized resident and a fully immunized caregiver is permitted.

**Q: Are general visitors permitted for outdoor visits when the home is in outbreak?**

A: General visitors are permitted to visit residents outdoors provided the resident is not symptomatic or isolating under Droplet and Contact precautions. This means that where a portion of the home is in outbreak, residents unaffected by that outbreak may still have outdoor visits.

**Q: Do homes have a choice to continue the restriction on general visitors?**

A: Per the Residents' Bill of Rights, homes must fully respect and promote a resident's right to receive visitors. The expectation is that provisions will be made for residents to see visitors according to ministry policy and guidance, and that homes will not place unreasonable restrictions on residents' ability to do so. **Where homes believe there is a valid health and safety issue, they should consult their local public health unit.**

Our hope is that together, with patience and a renewed sense of celebration, residents will be able to reunite with their friends, families and loved ones VERY SOON!

*Residents, please continue keep in touch with us. Your ongoing feedback is so important to us and it allows us elevate and share your lived experiences with our Ministry partners.*

Wishing you safety, health and happiness,



Dee Lender

Executive Director, OARC