

July 14, 2021

Ontario Updates LTC Testing Requirements effective Friday, July 16, 2021

Dear Residents and LTC Team Members,

This Friday, July 16th, Ontario is moving into stage three of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#) plan. This involves some significant changes to the mandatory COVID-19 surveillance testing and other important areas of resident life in your long-term care homes, including visitors, bus outings, leaves of absence, communal dining and recreation activities. **We encourage you to print, post and share this information with all residents and to continue to work in partnership with Residents' Council leaders to keep residents in the loop of these highly anticipated updates as proactively as possible.** OARC's [Communications Tool](#) might assist you in formatting your messaging.

Effective Friday, **Ontario will be removing the requirement that fully immunized and asymptomatic staff/team members, caregivers and visitors be tested before entering LTC homes.** Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated people will still need to be tested and follow physical distancing guidelines. This update to testing requirements was made in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and is based on the latest scientific evidence and advice.

Today's [News Release](#) from the Ontario government included the following "Quick Facts" to add further clarification around the anticipated changes and related expectations:

- A person is considered fully immunized if they have received the full series of a COVID-19 vaccine or combination of COVID-19 vaccines approved by Health Canada (e.g., two doses of a two-dose vaccine series) and they received their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days ago.
- People can prove they are fully immunized by showing the physical or emailed receipt that was provided to them at the time of vaccination. [Vaccination receipts can also be downloaded or printed through the provincial portal.](#)

- All long-term care homes are required to have a COVID-19 immunization policy for staff, students and volunteers. At a minimum, the policy must require people in those groups to provide proof of one of three things:
 - Vaccination against COVID-19;
 - A medical reason for not being vaccinated against COVID-19; or
 - Completion of a COVID-19 vaccination educational program
- Infection prevention and control measures, including masking and active screening of all people entering homes, will continue to be required regardless of immunization status.
- Full details of precautions and requirements in effect at long-term care homes are available on the Ministry of Long-Term Care's [website](#) and [guidance document](#).

Some other promising changes that come with easing current restrictions on Friday are:

- Removing the limits on the number of visitors to homes (*indoors and outdoors*)
- Permitting buffet and family style dining
- Providing all residents the ability to go on absences (*subject to isolation and testing requirements upon your return*)
- Resumption of off-site excursions for residents (*includes bus trips*)
- Resumption of activities such as singing and dancing

The Ministry of Long-Term Care has posted some supplementary documents that promote a more fulsome understanding of the updated Directives and guidance to LTC home teams. The OARC team urges you to consider printing and posting the Snapshot and FAQ tools for easy reference.

[Memo from the Assistant Deputy Minister of LTC, Erin Hannah](#)

[Minister's Directive on Surveillance Testing](#)

[Ministry of LTC Guidance Document](#)

[LTC Visitor, Absences & Social Gatherings Snapshot](#) (Excellent visual aid/table highlighting key changes)

[Ministry of LTC Pandemic Response Frequently Asked Questions Document](#) (*Refer to the yellow highlighted sections for specific details pertaining to the changes that will be effective July 16th, specifically in the areas of visitors, dining, outings and activities).

Are you a resident, or do you know a resident who might be keen to discuss these anticipated changes to life in LTC with other resident peers? Consider joining us for an upcoming [OARC Resident Forum](#), offered every Thursday!

We look forward to keeping in touch, and to celebrate alongside you as we move forward with renewed optimism and increased quality of life with these eased restrictions!