
March 23, 2023

Pandemic Response Update for Residents

Dear Residents and Residents' Council Supporters,

On March 22nd, our government released a [pandemic response update](#) to the long-term care sector, including changes to COVID-19 guidance which come into effect next week on March 31st.

Highlights of the anticipated changes include:

- Testing of team members (staff), caregivers and visitors who don't show symptoms (asymptomatic) is no longer required.
- Masking outdoors is no longer recommended for residents, caregivers and visitors, although wearing a mask outdoors continues to be recommended for staff when they are close to a resident.
- Daily temperature checks or screening of residents returning from an absence is no longer required.
- Removing the limit of one caregiver at a time during a COVID-19 outbreak, or when a resident is symptomatic or isolating.
- Social and physical activities can be held without adjusting for physical distancing.
- Long-term care homes that have retained COVID-19 proof-of-vaccination requirements are also encouraged to revisit their policies and consider allowing visitors and qualified staff, regardless of their vaccination status.

A high level summary of key changes have been captured in an updated [What Residents Can Expect](#) document. Highlighted excerpts from the [Pandemic Response Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) document might also be of interest to residents seeking additional information related to each specific area.

Please be sure to circulate, post and share this information with residents in your long-term care homes and consult with residents about how your home will be moving forward to implement these guidance changes.

OARC understands that for some residents and their supportive partners, the changes outlined above will be met with mixed reactions.

Some residents have told us that they would like to see a more accelerated approach when removing restrictions in their homes in order to ‘get back to normal life’. To these residents, we want to acknowledge and validate your disappointment and frustration (even anger) about the situation.

We also appreciate that others are reassured by the cautious, phased approach being taken, in consultation with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, to wind down COVID-19 measures in long-term care homes. To these residents, we also want to acknowledge any fears or concerns that you might be experiencing in response to these latest guidance changes and how they might affect you personally.

OARC is committed to listening to residents and reflecting your diverse voices and lived experiences at every opportunity. We continue to have weekly meetings with government and we promise to bring your questions and concerns forward. As so many of you do already, please continue to reach out to us, and always leverage any issues or recommendations that you have through your Residents’ Council.

OARC would like to echo our government’s direction to licensees to continue to consult with Residents’ Councils, ensuring that residents are meaningfully engaged in shaping visitor policies and the implementation of any practice changes in their homes.

To support your understanding and to provide an overview of the changes to long-term care homes, the Ministry is holding webinars for the sector on March 24th and March 27th. Each session will include the same content – no registration required.

- [Webinar 1: Friday, March 24th at 2:00-2:30 pm](#)
- [Webinar 2: Monday, March 27th at 12:00-12:30 pm](#)

Pandemic Update Resources:

- [Memo from Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Operations Division](#)
- [COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care homes](#)
- [Pandemic Response FAQs](#)
- [What Residents Can Expect](#)

Sincerely, Your OARC team