

Questions & Answers

Social Visitation, Personal Services, Social Outings – Long-Term Care and Seniors’ Assisted Living Facilities

Date: June 30, 2020

Social Visitation

What are the requirements for me to have social visits with my family member or friend who lives in a long-term care home or seniors’ assisted living residence?

- To support visits in long-term care homes and seniors’ assisted living residences, guidance has been developed by the Ministry of Health, which requires that facilities take a number of precautions to reduce the risk to residents.
- Family/social visits are limited to a maximum of **one** family member or friend at a time as space permits in a facility.
- Our priority is protecting residents, so we are taking a cautious and phased approach. For the month of July, residents will be able to visit with **one designated** family member or friend.
- We will reassess in August and the hope is to be able to expand this to safely include other family members or friends going forward, though there may still be a limit on the number of visitors at a given time.
- All visits must be booked in advance to allow for the operators of long-term care and assisted living residences to safely accommodate scheduled visitors.
- Care homes/residences may offer visits at three key locations:
 - Outdoor locations, which are dedicated to visiting (weather permitting);
 - Indoor designated locations; and

- Individual single-client rooms for residents with limited mobility.
- Visitors must bring a mask and wear it for the duration of the visit.
- Visits will not be allowed if there is an active COVID-19 outbreak at the home, and you will not be able to visit if you or the resident you are visiting are ill or have any COVID-19-like symptoms.

When will I be able to visit with my family member or friend who lives in a long-term care home or seniors' assisted living facility?

- Long-term care homes and seniors' assisted living facilities will need time to make the adjustments necessary ensure the safety of residents.
- Enabling social visits will not happen overnight. Operators must develop a written plan in accordance with the practice requirements to make sure all necessary precautions are in place to protect residents and visitors.
- As part of the process, the operators of individual homes and facilities will engage with residents, families and care providers to let them know of the proposed next steps and the process for visits.
- If a facility is able to meet the requirements outlined in the provincial guidelines, then social visits will be able to take place.

Why are you starting with only one designated visitor per resident?

- The safety of vulnerable residents is a priority.
- That is why we are taking a cautious and phased approach. It will allow us to limit the number of visitors to a facility and the contacts that a resident has.
- We will reassess in August and the hope is to be able to expand this to safely include other family members or friends going forward, though there may still be a limit to the number of visitors at a given time

Why are you only allowing one visitor per resident?

- The safety of residents and staff is a priority.

- We have limited the number of visitors within a visiting group to best support physical distancing and ensure more families are able to participate in visits.

Will every long-term care or assisted living facility offer social visits for residents and their friends or family?

- While we want to support families in reconnecting during this time, we recognize that accommodating all types of visits will not be possible at every site.
- Each home or residence must look at its unique infrastructure and resident population and determine if safe social visits can happen.
- We encourage families and friends to be patient with operators as they carefully consider how they can put in place plans that will enable a new way of visiting that meets provincial guidelines.
- The safety of residents, staff and visitors is a priority and the capacity of the home or residence to provide for visits will depend on whether all the appropriate safety measures, including the ability to maintain a two metre physical distance between residents and visitors, can be put in place during visits.
- Visits will not be allowed if there is an active COVID-19 outbreak at the home, and you will not be able to visit if you or the resident you are visiting are ill or have any COVID-19-like symptoms.
- We also continue to encourage families and friends to stay in touch virtually and remotely where in-person visitations are not possible.

Are there limits on the length of visits or the number of visits I can have in one week?

- In the same way that each home or residence must look at its unique infrastructure and resident population to determine if safe social visits can happen, facility operators will need to carefully consider the length and frequency of visits that they can accommodate.

Can I bring food, drink, or gifts with me to the visit?

- At this time, no items, including food or drink, may be exchanged between the resident and their visitors, unless the item is currently part of the resident's care plan

What added safety measure are you putting in place to protect against COVID-19?

- All visitors will be screened for signs and symptoms of illness, including COVID- 19, prior to every visit.
- If you have signs or symptoms of illness, or if you are in self-isolation or quarantine, you will not be permitted to visit.
- You will also be required to wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, make sure you cough or sneeze into your elbow and practice safe physical distancing.
- You will also be required to bring your own mask and wear it for the duration of the visit.
- Any furniture and surfaces in the visiting area will be sanitized at the end of each visit to meet BC Centre for Disease Control guidelines.
- Social visits will only be allowed if there is no active COVID-19 outbreak at the care home/residence.

What happens if I have an outdoor visit scheduled, but the weather is not good?

- Visits may be cancelled due to poor weather.
- If alternative arrangements can be made that ensure a safe visit can occur in another location and two metre physical distancing can be maintained, that option is available at the discretion of the care home/residence.
- If an alternate space is not available to support a safe visit, your visit may need to be cancelled and rescheduled.

Instead of meeting on the care home/residence grounds can I take my family member/ friend for a visit at another location?

- No. Residents must remain on the grounds of the care home/residence and in the designated visitation area for social visits.
- By having the visits occur on the grounds of the care home/residence appropriate measures can be put in place to protect against COVID-19, such as maintaining a two metre physical distance, which will help make sure that you and your loved ones remain safe.

Will I be required to wear a mask? Will there be plexiglass separating us or anything like that?

- All visitors must bring and wear a mask for the duration of their visit..
- Some care homes/residences may consider making physical alterations, such as adding plexiglass partitions, but this would be at the discretion of the care home/residence.
- This is not required to support social visits.

Are you going to cancel visits again if there is a second wave of COVID-19?

- The safety of vulnerable residents is a priority.
- If there is a second wave of COVID-19 it is possible that visits may need to again be temporarily restricted to prevent against the spread of this virus.
- Additionally, visits will not be allowed if there is an active COVID-19 outbreak at the home, and you will not be able to visit if you or the resident you are visiting are ill or have any COVID-19-like symptoms.

Social outings and appointments

What are the requirements for outside social activities and appointments?

- Older people and those with chronic health conditions are at higher risk of developing more severe illness or complications and it is strongly recommended that long-term care residents limit outside activities to essential outings only (i.e., medical appointments).
- However, residents in seniors' assisted living facilities who reside in their own suite are able to participate in social and external activities that are aligned with general public health guidance. Residents should protect themselves by avoiding large gatherings, staying away from people who are ill, maintaining safe physical distance and wearing a non-medical mask when in enclosed spaces such as transit or stores where safe physical distances cannot be maintained.

Why are you supporting outside activities for seniors' assisted living and not long term care residents?

- People living in long term care are very vulnerable to complications from COVID-19.
- Assisted living residents are generally less frail and because of the separate living arrangements there is less risk of transmission between residents.

When will outside activities resume for assisted living residents?

- Assisted living residents may resume social and external activities that are aligned with general public health guidance now.

Personal Services

What are the requirements for hairdressing and other personal services?

- To help ensure the safety of residents the following criteria must be met for personal services to be offered within long term care or seniors' assisted living facilities:
 - All service providers must follow the WorkSafeBC protocols for personal services returning to operation, including the development and submission of safety plans to the director of the facility/residence; and
 - Facility operators must keep a list of every resident who has received services and when these services are provided.

Why can't I leave my residence/ home and receive personal services like hairdressing in the community?

- B.C. has been successful in flattening the curve and has seen a steady decline in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks, but we must continue to make sure we remain vigilant.
- While residents are not restricted from accessing services, allowing personal services to be provided by a single service provider within a facility is a safer option for reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission than having residents go out into the community for these services (where you may have multiple residents visiting different service providers).

When will personal services be offered?

- Where it is feasible to have these services offered within a facility, work will begin to support personal services for residents.
- All service providers must follow the WorkSafeBC protocols for personal services returning to operation, including the development and submission of safety plans to the director of the facility/residence.

- Once a service provider has met the requirements, these personal care services may be offered.

How can I make an appointment?

- As plans are put in place, facilities will provide details of how residents can schedule appointments.

Will all long-term care homes and assisted living facilities be offering personal care services?

- While we want to support residents in receiving personal care services such as hairdressing, we recognize that accommodating this will not be possible at every site.
- Each home or residence must carefully consider its unique infrastructure and resident population and determine if safe personal care services can happen.
- As well, it is important to note that service providers must follow the WorkSafeBC protocols for personal services returning to operation, including the development and submission of safety plans to the director of the facility/residence.
- We encourage residents and families to be patient with operators as they carefully consider how they can put plans in place and work with service providers to resume these services in a way that meets provincial guidelines.

How will you decide which personal service provider(s) offer services within a facility?

- For the most part this will be a resumption of services for sites who already offered personal services, such as hairdressing.