



Holiday Guidance: Long-term Care Facilities and Executive Order 20-103

RESIDENTS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND REPRESENTATIVES

12/18/2020

Background

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the lives of people living in long-term care facilities. The pandemic impacts the health of those who have COVID-19 and affects all other residents through visitation restrictions that decrease valuable time spent with family and friends.

Each year, some residents wish to leave the nursing home or assisted living facility temporarily to visit family and friends for the holidays. Unfortunately, this year the winter holidays coincide with significant increases in community spread of COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that an important driver of the recent case increases is small family gatherings. The CDC and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommend that people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 avoid in-person gatherings with anyone they do not live with.

Before taking a loved one out of a facility, you should contact the facility administration to review quarantine plans and, if applicable, to make sure that an observation room will be available on their return. If one is not available, you may be required to care for your loved one at home until a room is available.

Instead of gathering in family homes, MDH recommends visiting with loved ones at their long-term care communities outdoors, or indoors if the organization meets criteria for safe indoor visitation. For residents who desire to exercise their right to leave their long-term care facilities to visit their homes or other destinations over the holidays, we recommend taking the following steps to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This guidance will be updated as more information becomes available.

- Most people living in long-term care facilities are considered at increased risk for COVID-19. **MDH strongly recommends against families taking people who live in long-term care facilities to their homes or to gatherings for holiday events.**

HOLIDAY GUIDANCE: LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES AND
EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-103

- Residents who currently require transmission-based precautions (TBP) for COVID-19 should not leave the facility to gather with others for holiday events. TBP is used when standard precautions alone are not enough to prevent the spread of infection.
- Residents who leave the building to gather with others may be required to quarantine upon return to the facility. This may vary depending on the COVID-19 status of the resident and the people they are visiting.
- A person who has not tested positive for COVID-19 in the past or who tested positive for COVID-19 more than 90 days prior to leaving the facility should be placed in quarantine for 14 days upon return to the facility.
- Residents who have tested positive within the 90 days prior to returning to the facility after the holiday visit may not need to quarantine upon their return. These residents must have initially tested positive by an RT-PCR test or tested positive by antigen test, with symptoms present during the initial infection. In addition, these residents must also have previously met criteria for release from isolation.
 - The time- and symptom-based approach for resident release from isolation is preferred by MDH and used by most facilities:
 - At least 10 days (or 20 days for those with severe to critical illness or severe immune compromise) have passed since symptoms first appeared AND
 - At least 24 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND
 - Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved
 - Test-based approach for resident release from isolation:
 - Negative molecular test (e.g., RT-PCR) results from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected more than 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens) AND
 - If resident was symptomatic, resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved
- Residents who have tested positive within the 90 days prior to returning to the facility should quarantine upon return to the facility if:
 - The resident has significant immunosuppression.
 - A member of the group (e.g., family) with which the resident visited develops COVID-19 in the 48 hours after the visit. Testing of residents may be recommended in this situation, within five to seven days of return. However, the difference between a new infection and a resident who has tested positive in the past can be challenging. People can continue to test positive for some time after having COVID-19, without having an active infection. This is called persistent positivity.
 - All residents who leave the building to gather with others for the holiday should be monitored for symptoms upon return.

Information for families

Plan ahead

Take steps to lower the risk that anyone in your house, or visiting your house, is exposed to COVID-19.

- **Limit chances for exposure:** For two weeks before your holiday gatherings, avoid indoor settings with people who do not live with you and where you cannot stay at least 6 feet away from others or consistently wear a mask (e.g., indoor social events, bars, restaurants, carpooling).
- **Wear a mask:** Wear a cloth mask at all times when you are inside at locations outside of your house or at outdoor events where you cannot stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- **Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly:** As recommended by the CDC, regularly wash your hands or use hand sanitizer and ask those coming in your house to do the same.
- **Physically distance:** Follow CDC guidelines and keep a distance of at least 6 feet from others who live outside your household, whenever you can.

Create a safe setting

Create a safe setting for those visiting.

- **Screen:** Ask anyone entering or staying in your house if they have had symptoms (e.g., fever, body aches, fatigue, runny nose, cough) of COVID-19 or if they have recently been near to someone with COVID-19.
 - People with symptoms should stay home and away from all others, and be tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible.
 - People who have spent time near a person with COVID-19 should stay home and away from others and should be tested five to seven days after the exposure.
- **Testing:** If possible, get yourself and your household members tested for COVID-19 in time to get the results before bringing a long-term care resident into your home.
- **Mask:** When at-risk people are visiting, wear a mask while visiting with them inside your house. In addition, you should wear a cloth face covering while in the car with them and avoid riding in cars with people outside your household whenever possible. If people staying with you can also wear a mask, ask them to do so as well.
- **Socially distance:** Set up your house so people can keep a physical distance between themselves and others. See [Indoor Air considerations: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html).

Contact the facility

Long-term care facilities follow strict regulations and guidelines to prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19 in their buildings. Before taking someone out of a long-term care facility, make sure you contact the facility administrator and understand the following:

- Visitation status: MDH guidance is available for window visits and outdoor visitation and for beginning indoor visitation again, based on Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Support (CMS) recommendations.
 - [CMS Visitation Guidance \(www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh.pdf\)](http://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh.pdf)
 - [Minnesota Home Care Provider/Assisted Living Visitation and Activities Guidance Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lcvisit.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lcvisit.pdf)

Many facilities are allowing both indoor and outdoor visitation and are planning for families to safely visit over the holidays. Please be aware that visitation may be restricted due to physical limitations of a given facility, weather conditions, and outbreak status in a facility, or in the county in which the facility is located and in surrounding counties.

In addition, the number of visitors allowed in the facility at one time may be limited to manage possible contact with COVID-19. Compassionate care visitation is a form of visitation that facilities will allow even if high county infection rates are high. Contact the facility administrator to schedule your family visitation to celebrate the holidays.

- Outbreak status: If a facility is currently having an outbreak of COVID-19 or currently testing individuals on suspicion of an outbreak, understand and consider the risks of exposing yourself and your family to COVID-19.

Vaccines and therapeutics are on the horizon, we anxiously look forward to the day when these restrictions can be removed.

Resources

- Residents and their loved ones may contact providers with questions about visitation.
- The Office of Ombudsman for Long-term Care is available if advocacy services are needed. Contact them at 651-431-2555 or 1-800-657-3591.
- [COVID-19 Guidance: Nursing Home Visitation and Activity Restriction Modifications \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/nhvisit.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/nhvisit.pdf)
- [Minnesota Home Care Provider/Assisted Living Visitation and Activities Guidance Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lcvisit.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lcvisit.pdf)
- [CMS Holiday Leave Recommendations from the Center for Clinical Standards and Quality/Quality Safety & Oversight Group \(https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid-facility-holiday-recommendations.pdf\)](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid-facility-holiday-recommendations.pdf)

HOLIDAY GUIDANCE: LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES AND
EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-103

- See [Executive Order 20-103 \(www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-103.pdf\)](http://www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-103.pdf) for the full version of the order.



Minnesota Department of Health | health.mn.gov | 651-201-5000
625 Robert Street North PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.