

Long-term Care Guidance for Non-medically Necessary Outings

FOR RESIDENTS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND REPRESENTATIVES

3/17/21

Background

On March 10, 2021, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) revised [CMS guidance QSO-20-39-NH \(www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf\)](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf) to incorporate positive changes resulting from COVID-19 vaccinations. Additionally on March 10, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new guidance for health care settings on infection control after vaccination. See [Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html).

CDC continues to evaluate the impact of vaccination and the emergence of COVID-19 variants on health care infection prevention and control recommendations; the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will update this guidance as new information becomes available.

Effective immediately, MDH will expect long-term care providers, including nursing homes and assisted living-type facilities to comply with the new CMS and CDC directives. This MDH guidance replaces previous versions of non-medically necessary outings guidance.

Key elements of the CMS and CDC guidance documents include:

- People are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 two weeks after their second dose of a vaccine that requires two doses (like Pfizer or Moderna), or two weeks after they get a single dose of a vaccine that requires one dose (like Johnson & Johnson).
- Residents who are currently in isolation or quarantine for COVID-19 should not leave their long-term care settings to gather with others. This applies to all residents, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated.
- Residents who leave the building to gather with others should watch for symptoms for 14 days once they return. This applies to all residents, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated.

Vaccinated residents

Residents who are fully vaccinated do not have to quarantine after non-medically necessary outings unless they spend 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19.

See [CDC: Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html).

For residents who are fully vaccinated and want to exercise their right to leave their long-term care facilities for outings that are not necessary for medical reasons, we recommend taking steps to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19:

- Residents who are fully vaccinated may gather indoors or outdoors with other people who are fully vaccinated.
- Residents who are fully vaccinated can visit indoors or outdoors with unvaccinated people from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 infection.
- If the resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact (including touch) with the persons they are visiting.
- Indoor and outdoor visits should be conducted following good infection control practices, such as wearing well-fitting masks that cover the mouth and nose, staying 6 feet from others (social distancing) when practical, and using good hand hygiene to reduce risk of infection.
- If a resident who is fully vaccinated chooses to attend a place of worship or other group event, or to shop or eat in public establishments, the resident should follow the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention. MDH strongly encourages attending places of worship or other group events only when the 14-day county percent positivity rate is below 5%. The positivity rate is the percentage of people who test positive for COVID-19 among all the people in the county who are tested.

Fully vaccinated residents should continue to:

- Take steps to prevent contact with COVID-19 in public settings. Examples include wearing a well-fitted mask over their mouth and nose, and physical distancing.
- Follow infection control practices, such as wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and perform hand hygiene to lower their risk when visiting with unvaccinated people who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 disease or who have a household member who is at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease and is not vaccinated.
- Wear masks, practice social distancing, and perform hand hygiene to lower their risk when visiting with people from multiple households who are not vaccinated.
- Comply with any current state mandates or restrictions on group size at the time of the outing.
- Get tested if they have [CDC: Symptoms of Coronavirus \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html).
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations.

- Continue to follow current guidance (e.g., social distance of 6 feet) inside their long-term care setting, as CMS and the CDC have not yet modified dining or activity guidance for inside a long-term care setting.

Unvaccinated residents

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 upon their return. If such a room is not available, you may be required to care for your loved one at home until a room is available.

For residents who are not fully vaccinated and leave for non-medically necessary outings, we recommend taking the following steps to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19.

- Unvaccinated residents who leave the building to gather with others may be required to quarantine when they return. The need to quarantine may vary as noted below, depending on whether the resident has had COVID-19 in the past 90 days and whether the people they visited are infected with or become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 within 48 hours after the visit (see details below). At this time, quarantine recommendations remain unchanged for an unvaccinated resident, regardless of their vaccination status in the event of exposure to COVID-19 from those with whom they gather.
- Unvaccinated residents who meet any of the following criteria should be placed in quarantine for 14 days upon return to the facility:
 - Have not tested positive for COVID-19 in the past.
 - Tested positive for COVID-19 more than 90 days prior to leaving on the outing.
 - Tested positive by antigen test (without an RT-PCR test to confirm the results) and had no symptoms during the initial infection.
- Unvaccinated residents who meet any of the following criteria do not need to be quarantined upon return to the facility:
 - Tested positive by RT-PCR testing within the 90 days before returning to the facility from an outing.
 - Tested positive by antigen test within 90 days before returning to the facility from an outing and had symptoms during the infection.
 - Have been released from isolation per MDH and CDC guidelines prior to outing (see link for discontinuation of TBP criteria in resources below).
- Residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the 90 days prior to returning to the facility from an outing should quarantine upon return to the facility if:
 - The resident is severely immunocompromised.
 - A member of the group (e.g., family) that 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.

Information for families

Plan ahead

Take steps to lower the risk that anyone in your house, or visiting your house, has contact with COVID-19.

- If you are unvaccinated, limit chances for contact. For two weeks before your 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 well-fitting mask (e.g., indoor social events, bars, restaurants, carpooling).
- Wear a well-fitting mask 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. See: [CDC: Improve How Your Mask Protects You \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html).
- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly: As recommended by the CDC, regularly wash your hands or use hand sanitizer and ask people 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 a fever, cough, body aches, fatigue, runny nose, or other symptoms, or if they have recently been near someone with COVID-19.
 - People with symptoms should stay home and away from all others. They should 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. They should be tested five to seven days after the contact.
- **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 well-fitting mask that covers your mouth and nose while visiting with them inside your house. In addition, you should wear a well-fitting mask while in the car with them. 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 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html).
- For current recommendations about creating a safe space for visitors, see [Protect Yourself & Others: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.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 setting, make sure you contact the facility and you understand the current guidelines.

- Visitation: MDH guidance is available for window visits, outdoor visitation, and for indoor visits again, based on Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Support (CMS) recommendations.
 - Updated CMS visitation guidance: [QSO-20-39-NH Revised \(cms.gov\)](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf) (www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf).
 - [COVID-19 Guidance: Long-term Care Indoor Visitation for Nursing Facilities and Assisted Living-type Settings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lcindoor.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lcindoor.pdf)

Vaccination for COVID-19 is ongoing. We look forward to the day when more restrictions can be removed. We continue to learn more about whether vaccinated individuals can transmit the virus. See [CDC: Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html).

Resources

- Residents and their loved ones may contact the facility where they live 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 800-657-3591.
- [Long-term Care: Visitors and outside services \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lc.html#visit\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lc.html#visit)
Additional visitation guidance for long-term care and assisted living-type facilities, including flowcharts for outbreak status and exceptions.
- [Interim Guidance for Discharge to Home or New/Re-Admission to Congregate Living Settings and Discontinuing Transmission-Based Precautions \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hospdischarge.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hospdischarge.pdf)
- [CDC: Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Disposition of Patients with COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-hospitalized-patients.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-hospitalized-patients.html)
- [CDC: Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html)



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