

# COVID-19

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



### Questions & Answers

— Information for Long-Term Care (LTC) Medical Staff —

#### Information on COVID-19 in Long-term Care

**Q. Where can I find information for practitioners about COVID-19 in Long-term Care?**

**A.** For information regarding COVID-19 response, please visit the [Infectious Disease Emergency Response](#) page on the InsideNet (only accessible within the IH network) or the [IH public webpage on COVID-19](#). Additionally, up-to-date information can be found on the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#) website and the [Ministry of Health](#) website.

The **Spectrum ID** app includes resources related to COVID-19 and Long-term Care. The app can be downloaded from the app store on any device and location set to “IH”. Under Guidelines, select Resources for Community and Long-Term Care. To view Spectrum ID on laptop/desktop computers, [click here](#).

#### Physician (MRP) Roles and Responsibilities within Long-term Care

**Q. What are my key roles and responsibilities as a LTC physician (MRP) during COVID-19?**

**A.** LTC physicians are asked for the following support during the COVID-19 response:

- Be aware of the Medical Health Officer (MHO) orders and guidelines related to provision of care within LTC facilities
- Support the identification of residents who are suspected or positive COVID-19 patients
- Support the early identification of facility COVID/respiratory outbreaks
- Identify residents receiving “End of Life” Care (weeks to months of life) to support appropriate family member and spiritual advisor visits for these residents
- Identify residents requiring essential care visits (e.g., paramount to resident care and wellbeing) and help inform exemption applications for visitors where applicable
- Ensure medically appropriate transfer of LTC residents including notification to and authorization by an MHO for residents with suspect or confirmed COVID-19

#### Grand Rounds: COVID-19 Response in Long-term Care

**Q. Where can I find copies of the Grand Rounds for Long-term Care held April 30?**

**A.** IH Grand Rounds related to COVID-19 Response in Long-term Care held April 30 are now available:

- [Access a copy of the presentation](#)
- [Listen to the audio recording](#)

## COVID-19 Clinical Decision Pathway for Long-term Care

**Q. What is the Clinical Decision Pathway COVID-19 in Long-term Care?**

**A.** The Clinical Decision Pathway COVID-19 in Long-term Care has been developed to assist in determining the best course of care for LTC residents with suspected or positive COVID-19.

**Q. Where can I get a copy of the Clinical Decision Pathway COVID-19 in Long-Term Care?**

**A.** The Clinical Decision Pathway COVID-19 in Long-term Care is available [here](#) and on the Spectrum ID app.

## Admissions/Repatriations to Long-term Care / Assisted Living during COVID-19

**Q. Can community members be admitted to Long-term Care or Assisted Living facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**A.** New admissions and repatriations to a Long-term Care or Assisted Living facility require 14 days in a private room with monitoring for symptoms. Staff and medical staff are to use routine practices including appropriate PPE (mask, eye protection and gloves).

No new admissions will be allowed to a LTC facility with a current COVID-19 outbreak.

## Residents Returning to a COVID-19 Outbreak LTC Facility

**Q. When can a resident who has temporarily lived elsewhere in the community return to their LTC facility?**

**A.** Where a LTC facility has a declared outbreak, all residents who have been temporarily removed to live elsewhere in the community (e.g., with family members) may not return until after the outbreak has been declared over by the IH Medical Health Officer (MHO).

## Transfers of Residents to/from Long-term Care Facilities

**Q. Where can I find information about inter-facility transfers of Long-term Care residents?**

**A.** On May 13, 2020, IH Medical Health Officers distributed the [MHO Requirements for Patient/Resident Inter-Facility Transfers \(updated and revised from April 18, 2020 memo\)](#) which provide greater clarity regarding revised requirements for LTC transfers.

**Q. Why do LTC resident transfers, admissions, and repatriations for clients with known or suspected COVID-19 require Medical Health Officer pre-approval during COVID-19?**

**A.** Given that LTC facilities are home to frail elderly residents who are at the highest risk of mortality from COVID-19, and in order to ensure the safety of these residents and minimize their risks during the pandemic, Medical Health Officers are available to consult on a case-by-case basis prior to any non-emergency resident inter-facility transfers, repatriations or admissions to help minimize risks to this vulnerable population.

**Q. Which LTC resident transfers requested by the MRP require Medical Health Officer notification and pre-approval?**

**A.** The Medical Health Officer (MHO) should be notified of, and provide pre-approval for, the following LTC resident transfers:

- Resident with known or suspected COVID-19 infection
- Resident who has had known contact with a COVID-19 positive case
- Residents from a facility with a current declared outbreak

All such transfers require contact and droplet precautions and notification to BC Ambulance Service and the receiving facility.

Emergent transfers (i.e. threat to life or limb) should NOT be delayed. The MHO may be notified as soon as possible thereafter.

## Provincial COVID-19 911 Long-term Care Transfer Algorithm

### Q. What is the Provincial COVID 911 Long-term Care Transfer Algorithm?

A. The Provincial COVID 911 Long-term Care Transfer Algorithm provides guidance for LTC staff, physicians, and BC Ambulance Service dispatchers to help ensure medically appropriate transfers of LTC residents during COVID-19. MRP involvement is required for decision making around options for care in place or endorsement of medically appropriate transfers.

Plans are currently underway for implementation within Interior Health in collaboration with BC Ambulance Services.

## Visitors to Long-term Care Residents

### Q. Are visitors to residents of Long-term Care restricted during COVID-19?

A. Routine visits from family members and friends of residents are not permitted.

Virtual online visits and contact with family and friends are encouraged and supported (see Virtual Care in LTC below).

Where the MRP has assessed a resident is at end of life (estimated as weeks to months of life), visits from a limited number of immediate family member(s) or spiritual advisor are permitted.

Where the MRP has deemed that visits are essential to ensure vital resident needs can continue to be met, an exemption may be requested by the LTC facility.

### Q. What protocols must visitors to residents of Long-term Care follow?

A. Approved visitors to LTC residents must:

- be asymptomatic
- adhere to LTC screening protocols prior to each visit
- adhere to LTC facility staff direction during visits
- adhere to infection control protocols including washing hands and wearing appropriate PPE (mask required, gown not required unless resident is on droplet precautions)
- visit only in the resident's room

## Group Social Activities

### Q. Are there restrictions regarding group social activities within LTC?

A. Yes, LTC facilities have been directed to cancel or postpone indefinitely all group social activities within the facility, including outdoor onsite activities and any planned community social activities, until further notice.

## Personal Protective Equipment

- Q. What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be used within Long-term Care facilities?**
- A.** Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) shall be worn by all staff and medical staff based on the status of the facility (outbreak/non-outbreak) and the COVID-19 status of the individual resident being provided with care. Please refer to current PPE standards for COVID-19.
- Q. Where can I access a supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for use within Long-term Care facilities?**
- A.** Each IH Long-term Care facility receives supplies of PPE through the health authority as managed by the Province and distributed through the health authorities. Please work with LTC facility managers to ensure you have access to appropriate PPE available for staff and medical staff when attending to residents within LTC facilities.

## COVID-19 Testing for Residents of Long-term Care and Assisted Living Facilities

- Q. Who should be tested for COVID-19 within LTC?**
- A.** COVID-19 testing should only be requested for those residents displaying symptoms of COVID-19. In the case of a facility outbreak, residents may be identified for COVID-19 testing based on symptoms, or contact with other residents/staff that are symptomatic or have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Current algorithms are available on the [Infectious Disease Emergency Response](#) page on the InsideNet (only accessible within the IH network) or the [IH public webpage on COVID-19 for health care professionals](#). These are being updated regularly based on direction from the Provincial Health Officer and the BCCDC, so please monitor regularly.

## Virtual Care in Long-term Care

- Q. What virtual care resources are available to support resident care within LTC facilities?**
- A.** Interior Health owned and operated LTC facilities have received iPads, and LTC staff members are being trained in use of these iPads to help support provision of virtual care within LTC facilities through the Zoom platform.
- Virtual care information is available on the [Physician section of the IH public website](#) and a [memo regarding use of Zoom on deployed iPads](#) is also available online.
- Q. How can physicians bill for virtual care?**
- A.** Doctors of BC and the Ministry of Health have agreed to billing rule changes to better utilize virtual care (telephone and telehealth) during COVID-19. More information is available on the [DoBC website](#).

## Supplies for Provision of Care within Long-term Care

- Q. Where can I access supplies for provision of care in place within Long-term Care facilities?**
- A.** LTC facilities are currently exploring options to have appropriate supplies on hand for provision of care in place.
- As we are working through these options, we are asking physicians to consider bringing suture kits and other appropriate supplies with them to help facilitate care in place for non-emergent medical issues that arise for their residents. This will help avoid unnecessary transfers to acute facilities.
- Please work with the Regional Medical Directors for Long-term Care and the managers of the LTC facilities where your residents reside to help identify any additional supplies which the sites may require to help support provision of care in place.

## Restriction of Services within Long-term Care

- Q. What services are currently restricted within Long-term Care facilities due to COVID-19?**
- A.** Some services are currently facing restrictions within Long-term Care, including Lab services and Community supports (e.g., nail care, wound care, behavioural specialists). Please check with LTC facility staff and managers to identify available options for necessary care and support for virtual care visits.

## Safe Handling of Deceased

- Q. What are the safe handling protocols for deceased residents with COVID-19?**
- A.** Recognizing the higher risk of transmission of COVID-19 within LTC facilities, IH has published guidelines for safe handling of deceased residents with COVID-19 [here](#).

## COVID-19 Long-term Care Resources

- Q. Who can I contact if I have questions?**
- A.** Questions can be sent to [medicalstaff@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:medicalstaff@interiorhealth.ca) and will be forwarded to the most appropriate staff member for response.

You can also contact your Regional Medical Director for Long-term Care:

- IH East – Dr. Trevor Janz at 250-352-1208 or [Trevor.Janz@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:Trevor.Janz@interiorhealth.ca)
- IH West – Dr. Janet Bates at 778-257-0365 or [Janet.Bates@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:Janet.Bates@interiorhealth.ca)
- IH Central – Dr. Diana Peters 250-549-2722 or [DianePeters@yahoo.com](mailto:DianePeters@yahoo.com)

- Q. What guidelines, tools and resources are available to support care of LTC residents during COVID-19?**
- A.** The following resources may be helpful for practitioners providing care in LTC facilities during COVID-19:

### MHO Orders and Memos:

- BC Provincial Health Officer - Guidance March 20: [LTC & AL Operators Guidance](#)
- BC Provincial Health Officer - Order March 27: [Movement Limitation of LTC Facility Staff](#)
- BC Provincial Health Officer - Order April 15: [LTC Facility Staff Assignment](#)
- IH Medical Health Officer Memo May 13: [MHO Requirements for Patient/Resident Inter-Facility Transfers \(updated and revised from April 18, 2020 memo\)](#)
- IH Medical Health Officer Order May 8: [LTC Facilities within IH](#)
- IH Medical Health Officer Memo May 8: [Infection Control Order Exemptions for IH LTC](#)

### Additional LTC Resource Links:

- IH Web Page – Medical Orders for Scope of Treatment (MOST) [https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourCare/PalliativeCare/ToughDecisions/Pages/Medical-Orders-for-Scope-of-Treatment-\(MOST\).aspx](https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourCare/PalliativeCare/ToughDecisions/Pages/Medical-Orders-for-Scope-of-Treatment-(MOST).aspx)
- IH Web Page – [Virtual Care](#)
- IH Memo – [LTC iPads and Zoom](#)
- IH Web Page – [Palliative/End of Life for Residents/Families](#)
- IH Web Page – [Palliative/End of Life for Practitioners](#)