

December 15, 2021

ATTN: Families and Visitors of Nithview Community and Greenwood Court

On December 14, 2021, the Government of Ontario announced new temporary safety precautions and restrictions for all Long-Term Care (LTC) homes in the province. With the rapid rise and community spread of the COVID-19 OMICRON variant, Tri-County Mennonite Homes (TCMH) will be implementing several changes in order to meet government directives.

In general, these changes will be implemented the same way across both Nithview Community and Greenwood Court, allowing for slight variation between the locations due to the physical differences in the building layout. We have also included the information provided by the government, for those individuals who would like to read the specific details. *PLEASE NOTE: There may be local variation based on directions from the Regional Medical Officers of Health. If this happens, we will communicate region specific changes to the affected families and visitors.*

What is changing for Visitors at TCMH?

1. All visitors must be fully vaccinated before entering the Home. **The new government directive states that effective December 15 at 7:00pm, all GENERAL VISITORS to a LTC home will need to be fully vaccinated to enter the home.** Currently, fully vaccinated means 14 days after your second dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine. Guidelines were also established by the province for non-vaccinated individuals during palliative or end-of-life situations. Please see the attached documents for additional details.
2. Essential caregivers must also be vaccinated. **Provincial directives state that effective December 20, ESSENTIAL CAREGIVERS will be required to show proof of their first dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine** with proof of their second dose by February 21, 2022. Anyone designated as an essential caregiver after December 14 will be required to be fully vaccinated to enter our Homes, in accordance with the new directives. Up to December 20, if an essential caregiver is unvaccinated, their visit will be restricted to the resident's room.
3. Surveillance testing and rapid tests required of everyone entering the Homes. **Effective December 17, the province requires all caregivers, staff, volunteers, and students to be rapid tested twice a week regardless of vaccination status.** For general visitors and support workers, you must provide proof of a negative test obtained on the day of your visit or the day before your visit. Rapid tests can be completed at both locations if you do not arrive with your test results. Testing is also required for outdoor visits.
4. Limited number of visitors. **Effective December 17, indoor visits are limited to two (2) visitors per resident.** Outdoor visits are limited to four (4) visitors per resident. Outdoor visits are encouraged as long as the weather holds out.

5. Enhanced Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) measures. The Ministry has directed Homes to increase IPAC practices and audits to keep our Homes as safe and clean as possible. You will be asked to wear a mask at all times while in the Homes. You may also be asked to wear additional PPE such as gowns, goggles, or protective shields.

How do these changes affect residents, families, and visitors at Nithview and Greenwood?

At TCMH, our Retirement Homes are co-located with our LTC Homes. The retirement suites are physically in the same building as the long-term care home. That means the same expectation will apply to visitors to the Retirement Home. Anyone visiting our Retirement Homes must be fully vaccinated and will be asked to follow IPAC protocols. At Nithview Community, this also includes anyone visiting our Independent Living residents in The Tower because they live alongside our co-located retirement suites. At Greenwood Court, Independent Living apartments are not affected by these changes.

For our visitors, you can expect that accessing our Homes will take a bit longer than usual, so please plan your visits accordingly. Rapid testing takes 15 minutes to complete and answering the screening questions can take a few more minutes as well. To ensure timely visits with your loved ones, please allow approximately 20 minutes to complete all the provincially required screening and testing.

For our residents, there are also a few changes coming. TCMH will continue to cohort activities such as singing, dancing, and mealtimes. Under the new directives, limited social day trips are allowed for fully vaccinated residents, but residents must complete surveillance testing (take a rapid test) when they return from their social outing. Social over-night trips are suspended. If a resident wishes to leave for an overnight trip, they will be discharged and must follow re-admission protocols when they return. All residents, regardless of vaccination status, can continue to leave for essential reasons like medical appointments. **These changes take effect on Friday, December 17 for LTC residents. For Retirement residents, these changes take effect December 22.** More details about changes for residents can be found in the attached documents from the government.

We anticipate everyone will notice the changes happening across TCMH and we ask for patience and understanding. These changes are provincial directives, and we cannot make exceptions. We are working with our staff to make visits as smooth as possible, but we need your help in this as well. Together, we can *Make Every Day Matter* for your loved ones in our care. If you have any questions, please contact us – we are only a phone call or an email away and we want to help make these changes as effective as possible for the safety and wellbeing of our residents.



Dr. Steven Harrison, CEO

Requirements and Guidance for Long-Term Care Homes

Effective December 17th (except where otherwise specified)

The requirements below are for Long-Term Care Homes that are not in an outbreak. For requirements for homes in an outbreak, please refer to COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures document.

Area	Summary Requirements
Surveillance Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test all fully vaccinated staff, students, volunteers, and caregivers, at minimum, 2 times per week, in addition to existing testing requirements for those not fully vaccinated. • General visitors / support workers, regardless of vaccination status, require proof of negative test upon entry, taken the day of the visit, or on a previous day. Testing is also required for outdoor visits. • Testing not required for infants under one year of age. • Individuals who show proof of a confirmed COVID-19 infection in the past 30 days should not be re-tested except with the onset of symptoms or if they've travelled outside of Canada in the 14 days prior to entering a home*.
Vaccinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective December 15 at 7pm: Restrict general visitors who are not fully vaccinated from entering the long-term care home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outdoor visits still permitted (where feasible) for unvaccinated individuals. • Effective December 20: To gain entry to the home, caregivers must show proof of their first dose as of December 20th and by February 21, 2022 to show proof of all required doses. **Caregivers designated after December 14th are required to be fully vaccinated to gain entry to the home.
Visitors (general visitors and caregivers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Outdoor</i> visits (where feasible): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Up to four people per resident at a time (includes caregivers). • <i>Indoor</i> visits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Up to two people per resident at a time (includes caregivers). • Residents can designate a maximum of two caregivers (unless more than two caregivers were already designated prior to December 14th).
Activities (communal dining, social activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohorting of residents for high-risk activities (singing, dancing etc.) and dining. • Large group social activities are discouraged. • Performances/entertainers permitted in adherence to visitor requirements regarding testing and vaccination.
Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase frequency of audits to every two weeks to ensure adequate supply and preparation. • Homes are reminded of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Infection Prevention and Control for Long-Term Care Homes: Summary of Key Principles and Best Practices ○ COVID-19: Infection Prevention and Control Checklist for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes

Area	Summary Requirements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems in Buildings and COVID-19</u> • Reinforce staff cohorting, including during breaks, and use virtual staff meetings where possible.
Absences/ Admissions/ Transfers	<p>Day absences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day absences for social purposes are permitted for fully vaccinated residents only. <p>Overnight absences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overnight absences for social purposes are being suspended, regardless of vaccination status. Residents who wish to leave the home overnight for social purposes will need to follow the appropriate discharge process, as required in section 147.1 of O.Reg.79/10 (General) under the <i>Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007</i> as well as the re-admission protocol when they return at a later date. • Essential, medical and compassionate and palliative absences are still permitted, regardless of vaccination status. <p>Requirements upon return/admission/transfer to home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day absences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Actively screen residents upon return; ○ Rapid test <u>and</u> PCR test on day 3 following absence, followed by a PCR test on day 7. No isolation is required unless positive result is received. ○ If known exposure to a case, PCR test on day 1 and day 7 and isolate until a negative result is confirmed from day 7. • For all return/admissions/transfers from another healthcare facility that is not in an outbreak: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If asymptomatic and fully vaccinated and no known exposure to a case, do PCR test prior to admission or on arrival at the LTCH, with isolation until a negative test result is received. ○ Do enhanced symptom screening on admission and twice daily for 10 days following the return/admission/transfer. • For all other return/admissions/transfers to the home (not including day absences): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A PCR test is required prior to admission or on day 1, and on day 7. Isolation is required until a negative result is confirmed from day 7 (the test prior to admission is only valid the day of, or from the previous day). ○ Do enhanced symptom screening on admission and twice daily for 10 days following the return/admission/transfer.
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homes are reminded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All individuals must be screened prior to entry into the home. ○ Once daily symptom screening is required for residents in the home unless requirements related to return/admissions/transfers apply.

Area	Summary Requirements
Preparedness Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes should review and update their fall preparedness planning checklists (or other documents) to ensure current.

* Testing can also be considered if there is exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19, if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the home, or at the direction of the local public health unit.

**Exception for those visiting residents receiving end of life care and those with valid proof of medical exemption – they are to be restricted to the residents’ rooms. Infants under the age of 1 are also permitted.

Source Documents: [Directive #3, Directive #5 COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario](#) [The Minister’s Directive on Long-Term Care COVID-19 Immunization Policy](#) [Minister of Long-Term Care’s Directive COVID-19: Long-term care home surveillance testing and access to homes](#)

Key Messages to Support Residents and Families
Temporary Enhanced Measures in LTC Homes
December 14, 2021

- The Ministry of Long-Term Care is implementing temporary enhanced measures in light of the highly transmissible Omicron variant.
- These temporary enhanced and responsive measures are necessary to provide optimal safety and support to residents while balancing the mental and emotional well-being of residents and their families, and to safeguard the staff who are critical to the care of residents.
- Enhanced measures include:
 - Enhanced surveillance testing for all staff and anyone entering the home, regardless of vaccination status
 - Vaccination requirements for general visitors and caregivers
 - New visitor limits
 - Day absences limited to residents who are fully vaccinated
 - Suspended overnight absences for social purposes
 - Cohorting for some higher-risk activities singing and dancing, in addition to dining
 - Large group activities discouraged
- In addition to the enhanced measures, all residents, staff and caregivers are strongly urged to receive a booster / third dose as they become eligible, as the latest available evidence shows that three doses of vaccine are more effective against the Omicron variant than two doses.
- Everyone is reminded of the importance of remaining vigilant with public health measures, such as masking and social distancing, both in the home and in the community.

Questions & Answers

1. Why restrict unvaccinated caregivers from entering the home?

Answer: Caregivers are essential to the well-being of residents. It is why the ministry has given lead-time for caregivers to receive their first dose by December 20th and all required doses by February 21, 2022. Post February 21st, unvaccinated caregivers would only be able to enter the home to visit residents receiving end of life care or if they have a valid medical exemption. In these instances they would be limited to the residents' room.

During the transition period leading to the February 21st deadline, caregivers who are not fully vaccinated would also be limited to the residents' room, as well as being subject to the increased testing requirements and ongoing PPE requirements.

2. Why restrict residents from seeing their unvaccinated grandchildren?

Answer: As Omicron continues to accelerate, it is the Ministry's top priority to keep COVID-19 out of homes.

Children who are not fully vaccinated pose a high risk of the virus entering the home. Children may be exposed to viruses in school, daycare and other settings. In addition, COVID-19 cases among children aged 5-11 have been showing the highest growth of new cases in recent weeks.

Infants under the age of one are not considered visitors and can enter the home (testing and vaccination requirements do not apply to them). Fully vaccinated visitors, including children aged 5-11 are permitted into the home.

3. What proof of vaccination are homes allowed to accept?

Answer: Starting January 4th, 2021, all individuals will be required to use the QR code as proof of vaccination. The QR code can be used digitally or by printing a paper copy. Those without a phone or a computer may get their QR code at their local library, Service Ontario center, or call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 to have their vaccine certificate mailed to them. Those with medical exemptions will also be required to have a QR code. Until that time, homes can continue accepting vaccination proof by QR code or using the receipt provided at the time of vaccination.

4. Aren't there other measures that homes could take, such as increasing PPE for unvaccinated individuals rather than restricting caregivers and general visitors?

Answer: These enhanced measures are necessary to provide safety to residents and staff in a concerted and collective effort to reduce the risk of the virus entering the home, in light of the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

All homes and individuals should follow the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements as advised by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Public Health Ontario Infection Prevention and Containment

(IPAC) best practices. There is no difference in PPE best practices for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.

5. How can residents, staff and caregivers obtain their COVID-19 vaccine or booster doses?

Answer: Residents, staff and caregivers are eligible for a booster / third dose if at least six months have passed since their last dose. The booster / third dose is being offered to strengthen protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 since evidence has shown gradual waning immunity six months after receiving the second dose. It is critical that everyone living and working in a long-term care home is protected to the greatest extent possible, in particular given the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

All residents are able to receive their third dose vaccine in the home. Wherever possible homes will also be administering these vaccines to staff and caregivers. Where homes are not able to directly administer vaccines onsite, staff and caregivers can go book an appointment on the provincial [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#), by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900, or through [select pharmacies](#) and primary care settings.

Individuals who have not yet received a second dose and who wish to receive their second dose at an interval less than 8 weeks from their first dose must call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre or their local public health unit.

In addition, as a reminder, the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccine is now available to individuals aged 18 and over who have an allergy or contraindication to mRNA vaccines or at the request of an individual who has not yet been vaccinated by contacting their public health unit.

6. Are there restrictions on resident activities within the home?

Answer: To support the mental health and well-being of residents, activities within the home, such as communal dining, social activities, and exercise classes, continue to be permitted, but large group activities are discouraged and residents should be cohorted for higher-risk activities, such as dining, singing and dancing. Resident Councils' play an important role in the home and should continue to meet.

7. Why restrict overnight absences for social purposes? What happens if a resident leaves overnight for social purposes?

Answer: Overnight absences for social purposes have been suspended, based on advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and rapidly increasing community transmission of Delta and Omicron variants.

Extended periods of time in the community may create a significant risk of exposing residents to the virus, in particular the highly transmissible Omicron variant, which increases the risk of COVID-19 coming into the long-term care home. According to recent data from the UK, the risk of household transmission is 3.2 times higher with the Omicron variant than it was with the Delta variant.

Residents who wish to leave the home overnight for social purposes will be temporarily discharged and will need to follow the appropriate discharge process. To return to the home, the resident will need to follow the re-admission protocol. All residents may continue to leave the home for essential, medical or compassionate absences.

8. What if an unvaccinated general visitor shows up at a long-term care home?

Answer: Unvaccinated general visitors are permitted to visit residents outdoors where feasible, after being tested or showing proof of a negative test from the previous day. General visitors are also able to take fully vaccinated residents for day absences although safe practices and behaviours should be explained and strongly encouraged. When returning from a day absence, residents will need to follow enhanced symptom screening and testing requirements, and may need to be isolated if they had a known exposure and/or if they test positive.