

June 18, 2020

Outdoor Social Visits – What You Need to Know

We miss and need our families in our Homes, so we are pleased the government has given us the go ahead to begin outdoor visits today as a cautious first step (and once they're fully prepared).

Rest assured, each of our long-term care and retirement Homes is working on a plan to welcome families for a safe, physically distanced outdoor visit with your loved one as soon as possible. This includes making it as easy as possible for families to schedule visits, which families told us in a recent survey is especially important.

We have put many precautions in place with everyone's safety in mind and aligned with government directives. Most of our Homes are ready to welcome families now. Here's what you need to know ahead of time:

- Visits can only take place when a Home is not in active outbreak (weather and other factors may also affect a Home's ability to support visits).
- To support a smooth process that is fair to all, we are asking families to please schedule/coordinate their visits with the POA/Substitute Decision Maker.
- We will do our best to accommodate visit requests, however we also need to ensure every family has an opportunity to visit. Frequency of visits will be based on equitable access.
- One family member is permitted at a time/day.
- All visitors will be actively screened, including temperature checks. Note: this does not apply to window or drive-by visits.
- **Visitors must have a negative COVID-19 test within the previous two weeks.**
- Personal Protective Equipment (mask) will be provided and required, along with hand hygiene.

Each Home is reaching out to families with info about how visiting will work at their Home. This includes sharing a brief fact sheet about the visiting guidelines. Our program leaders are the contact for more information. Please feel free to give them a call anytime.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the difference between a social visitor and an "essential visitor"?

By Ministry definition, essential visitors include persons performing essential support services (e.g. food delivery, phlebotomy, maintenance, providing care services and other healthcare services required to maintain good health) or a person visiting a very ill or palliative resident. A social visitor is one whose primary goal is to be that important source of mental and emotional strength for residents.

Do I need to have a negative COVID-19 test prior to visiting?

Yes. Aligned with Ministry directives, social visitors must have a negative COVID-19 test within the past 14 days.

Do I need to bring proof of my COVID-19 negative test?

We will accept an attestation from a visitor that they have had a negative COVID-19 test in the past two weeks. The visitor sign-in at the active screening will include an acknowledgement and confirmation of this attestation.

Where can I get my COVID-19 test?

Visit www.COVID-19.ontario.ca to find an assessment centre near you.

How do I book a visit?

Each peopleCare Home has developed their own plans and processes based on the needs of their residents and families. We are looking to make the process as easy as possible, including self-scheduling if possible. Scheduled visits were one of the top-ranked “must-haves” related to outdoor social visits in our recent family survey. Your ED or Director of Programs can give you specific instructions for booking.

Who can attend an outdoor social visit?

At this time we are able to support a phased approach, starting with one visitor at a time. We are asking each resident, or their substitute decision maker (SDM), to decide who will visit from each family and in which order they visit.

Can I visit more than once a week?

We are focused on ensuring every family who wants to visit has an opportunity to do so, starting with one visit per week for each resident. Once everyone who wants to visit in a week has had the chance to do so, we will do our best to accommodate additional visits.

What are the guidelines for an outdoor social visit?

We have prepared a handout to support all visitors in understanding the guidelines that we have put in place to keep everyone safe, aligned with the Ministry directives. We are going to email this information to all SDMs and will have the information available when people come for a visit.

Do I need to bring my own mask?

We will have PPE available in case you are having trouble sourcing your own mask.

Will my loved one be wearing a mask?

Residents will not be wearing a mask. Universal masking is required for all staff and visitors, including during outdoor social visiting, to protect the residents.

With outdoor social visits starting, are you discontinuing virtual visits?

In our recent survey, many of you told us that virtual visits are a valued way to engage with your loved one. We will continue to support virtual visiting to the extent possible and for all those who choose to keep in touch with their loved one in this way.