

November 12, 2020

NOTICE TO ALL LONG-TERM CARE HOMES/RETIREMENT HOMES

OPH ADVISORY: Universal Masking Recommendations Extended to Residents

Strategies to Reduce Transmission of COVID-19 among staff

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) recognizes the challenges facilities face in implementing frequently updated recommendations; however, it is important to continue to take action to prevent the entry of COVID-19 within LTCHs and RHs and to reduce spread among our most vulnerable residents.

The provincial government has issued several directives for LTCHs and RHs to provide the necessary guidance and authority to control COVID-19 outbreaks. This includes the following directives issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario: [Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act](#), 2007, issued under Section 77.7 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA), R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7; (updated August 28, 2020) and [Directive #5 for Public Hospitals within the meaning of the Public Hospitals Act and Long-Term Care Homes within the meaning of the Long-Term Care Homes Act](#), 2007.

Strict adherence to infection prevention and control (IPAC) best practices and outbreak management guidelines are essential to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. RHs and LTCHs are required to ensure the protection of all those living in and working at the facility.

Ottawa is still in high alert after a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases in our community. This continues to put our most vulnerable population at a higher risk, as members of the community enter facilities as workers and essential visitors, and residents leave the facility for essential absences.

It is for this reason that **OPH strongly advises that universal medical grade masking in LTCHs and RHs be extended to residents** (as tolerated). The use of medical grade masks is strongly recommended in all indoor public spaces in these facilities to limit the spread of COVID-19.

As well, it has been noted that there is ongoing, continued transmission among staff members in our local facilities. This puts residents, other staff members and the community at greater risk.

As COVID-19 is sometimes spread through contact with **asymptomatic** people, it is essential that the following control measures are following in all facilities, regardless of outbreak status, in order to reduce staff exposures and illness:

1. Adherence to screening protocols as directed by [Directive #3](#) , which includes:
 - a. Active screening must occur twice daily (at the beginning and end of the day or shift) and must include symptom screening and temperature checks.
 - b. Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 must not be allowed to enter the home and must be advised to go home immediately to self-isolate and be encouraged to be tested.

The individual doing the screening must have the authority to send staff home if they fail screening; they must also be appropriately protected with mask and eye protection.

2. Facilities are responsible to ensure staff separation in lunchrooms, break rooms, smoking areas and other areas where masks are removed. Staff who carpool together should be encouraged to wear masks in the car.
3. All staff and visitors should wear eye protection in any resident or clinical area; this is **in addition** to the universal masking requirement while in the facility.

Together, with our health system partners, OPH's approach to LTCHs and RHs continues to prioritize staff and resident safety.

If you have any questions, please contact our IPAC and Outbreak Reporting Line at: 613-580-2424, ext. 26325.

Sincerely,



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Ottawa Public Health