

# family update

July 22, 2020

Dear families,

We are grateful to let you know that we continue to do well at all our sites in keeping COVID-19 at bay.

Last Thursday, the Chief Medical Officer of Health released public health [Order 29-2020](#) pertaining to visitation in continuing care, supportive living, and hospice centres. The order allows for more options for you to visit your loved one and it requires that we have a policy, processes, and plans in place to facilitate the visits. We are working hard on this and will be taking a phased approach to implementing the directives issued in the order to ensure the continued health and safety of your loved ones and our staff.

An important requirement of the order is assessing our collective risk tolerance. COVID-19 continues to be present; it has not gone away. Evidence continues to indicate that seniors are among the most susceptible population to experience severe symptoms of COVID-19. Increasing the number of people in contact with residents also increases the potential for infection. We must keep these factors in mind as we work through the changes in visitation.

Effective July 23, 2020, as part of our first phase of implementing the new order, we will:

- Continue virtual visits
- Continue outdoor visits as is and, where feasible, increase the number of visitors to a maximum of five individuals
- Coordinate indoor visits, in the resident's room, with the two essential family/support people
- Invite you to bring food for your loved one in a container that can be wiped down with disinfectant
- Ask you to either drop off gifts for your loved one to us for delivery or give them the gift during your visit

As we prepare to launch this first phase we ask you to:

- Identify two people who will be the essential family/support individuals for a resident's physical and mental wellbeing. These individuals are able to visit their loved one outdoors or indoors in the resident's room.
- Continue to schedule visits with us ahead of time
- Expect to be screened (temperature check and questionnaire) and to show photo identification if you are entering the building
- Participate in safe visitation education each time you enter the building
- Wash your hands with soap and water before, during, and after your visit
- Wear a mask and other personal protective equipment (PPE) as required, while inside the building; we will provide PPE
- Maintain a physical distance of six feet from one another (unless visitors are from the same household)

## An innovative solution

Six weeks ago, we began piloting an on-line scheduling software for families to book visits with their loved one. Prior to this, the recreation team was handling the scheduling—taking precious time away from their work with residents.

With the introduction of the software, families can now book visits quickly and easily and the recreation team is once again doing what they love.

You can access the scheduling software by logging on to [covenantcare.ca](http://covenantcare.ca) and clicking the communities tab in the top menu bar.

- Tell us if you have been exposed to COVID-19 in the 14 days prior to visiting and in the 14 days following your visit
- Read the visitor guidelines created by the Alberta Health, in conjunction with the release of the new order, by clicking [here](#) or going online to <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-fact-sheet-family-support-visiting.pdf>

The order indicates that additional visitors are permitted in extenuating circumstances including end of life (when death is likely within four to six weeks), change in health status (medical, social, spiritual crisis), and pressing circumstances (financial or legal matters, family crisis). These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Co-responsibility is an important basis for the guidelines outlined in the new order. We must work together to minimize risk of infection for residents and staff. We continue to take all possible precautions including handwashing, screening, continuous masking, physical distancing, increased disinfecting, and more. Please carefully consider your potential exposure to COVID-19 before visiting; remember that we each bring every interaction we've had in the previous fourteen days into our next interaction.

As an organization and individual centres, a number of factors impact our risk tolerance that we must continuously assess including the total number of residents, staff, and visitors on site at any given time, the layout of our centres including how visitors enter the building and walk through common areas to enter their loved one's room, the collective health and wellbeing of residents, the number of residents who leave the centre for appointments, and the safety and health of our teams.

The order requires that we develop a visitation policy outlining our principles, approach, and expectations. Please let us know if you would like to see the policy. We have attached safe visitation and PPE information with this update to help you be more prepared. Please note that this does not replace the on-site safe visitation education you will receive each time you come into the centre.

It is imperative that visitors follow the stipulations to minimize risk of infection. We will address any concerns with you directly, should any arise.

Please contact your Site Administrator with questions or send them to us at [admin@covenantcare.ca](mailto:admin@covenantcare.ca).

The most recent public health information on COVID-19 is available at [ahs.ca/COVID](https://ahs.ca/COVID). Updates, information, and good news stories on our centres is available at [covenantcare.ca](https://covenantcare.ca).

Thank you for your continued patience and for navigating these changes with us,

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