

resident, staff, and family update

December 24, 2021

Dear residents, staff, and families,

We are most certainly being gifted a white Christmas this year! That each snowflake is intricate and unique is a reminder of the miracle of this season.

While the news of the high transmissibility of Omicron is worrying, we are doing our very best, as always, to create and maintain a safe, healthy environment for our whole Covenant Care community—residents, staff, and family—to be present with and care for one another. We are in this together, as we have been for almost two years.

Yesterday afternoon, the Chief Medical Officer of Health released a letter to continuing care operators and a new Order (CMOH 58-2021) regarding additional precautions given the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of COVID. The orders pertain to residents, staff, and families. We have been asked to implement them as soon as possible.

Please review this summary and let us know if you have any questions.

Changes for residents

Residents who have been away from the care centre for a period of 24 hours or longer or who have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for any variant of COVID will be required to wear a surgical/procedure mask for 14 days while in common areas (except when eating or drinking). We will conduct daily screenings for residents (a new screening tool has been provided by Alberta Health). We are also looking into the feasibility of performing rapid tests for residents in the days following their return to the centre and/or from their last exposure.

Changes for staff

Staff Screening and Testing—Fully immunized staff who have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for any variant of COVID must take a rapid test daily for ten days following exposure. If they test negative, they can attend to work. If they test positive, they must isolate and take a PCR test to confirm the diagnosis. With a negative PCR test, and no symptoms, staff can return to work. A positive PCR test requires isolation for 10 days or until symptoms resolve.

Staff PPE—The CMOH Order is mandating that all staff continuously wear a well-fitted surgical/procedure mask or a seal-checked respirator while on shift, whether in direct care or in

Close contact is someone who, without consistent and appropriate use of PPE, provides care to, lives with, or has close physical contact with a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or has come into contact with the infectious body fluids of a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

non-care areas unless they are working alone in an office or when a barrier is in place. As an additional measure, we are requiring all staff to wear continuous eye protection while on shift. Masks and eye protection will be provided. Should staff be caring for someone with a suspected, probable, or confirmed case of COVID, they must wear gown, gloves, eye protection, and a respirator.

Visitor PPE

Alberta Health has provided an updated screening tool for visitors, which we will begin using immediately. Visitors must wear either their own seal-checked KN-95 mask or a well-fitted surgical/procedure mask. We highly recommend you also wear continuous eye protection, which we can provide for you.

Please remember that visitors who have known or probably contact with COVID cannot enter our centres for 14 days from last known contact. This applies to all visitors, regardless of vaccine status.

Booster doses and rapid test kits

Albertans over 18 years of age is now eligible to receive the booster dose of the COVID vaccine, provided that five months have passed since the second dose. Evidence is indicating that the third dose is vital in combatting Omicron. Please call your local pharmacy or 811 to book your booster dose.

In addition, rapid test kits are available free of charge from pharmacies. Each kit contains five rapid test swabs. Alberta Health is recommending that Albertans experiencing symptoms take the rapid test on their own at home to free up lab resources to test for vulnerable populations. If you do not have access to rapid tests and are experiencing symptoms, you can still receive a test from your pharmacy and/or AHS clinics.

Take extra good care

Please heed the provincial government's recommendation to minimize your interactions this holiday season. This is important advice and we must do what we can to keep ourselves, our families, our neighbours, and our communities safe.

We wish you a season and year ahead filled with blessings.

As always, we will keep you informed as we hear of any further changes. Please direct any concerns or questions to your Site Administrator or one of us. You can also email admin@covenantcare.ca.

Please do all you can to stay well and be healthy.

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