



Celebrating the Holidays Safely in Long-Term Care Homes during the Respiratory Illness Season

As of December 6, 2022

Long-term care homes are encouraged to find and support ways for residents to enjoy the holidays safely with their friends and family, while adhering to the provincial guidelines and Public Health Unit direction. The following guidelines apply when homes are not experiencing an outbreak; during an outbreak, requirements, as set out in the applicable guidance documents and per direction of Public Health Units, may differ.



Immunizations

- Staff, residents, caregivers and general visitors should get their flu and COVID-19 vaccinations, including booster doses, as soon as eligible.



Visiting

- During the holidays, friends and families should be encouraged to visit their loved ones.
- Individuals should not visit if they [are ill or have even mild symptoms of being ill](#). Visitors who cannot visit in person can keep in touch with loved ones by phone or video chat.
- Follow the current [provincial guidance](#) for visitors.



Absences

- Encourage friends and families hosting residents to read the [Public Health measures and advice](#).
- Follow the current [provincial guidance](#) for absences.



Food

- Celebrating the holidays with food is important for many people and is encouraged, as long as the [provincial guidance](#) on communal dining is followed.
- If residents have communal food gatherings, they should be reminded to not share food with others.
- Review the Government of Canada's [Holiday Food Safety](#) webpage.
- Remind residents and staff to clean their hands before and after eating, and when handling food products or packaging.



Hand Hygiene

- Staff, residents, caregivers and visitors are reminded of the [Best Practices for Hand Hygiene](#) guide, which was developed to help reduce health care

associated infections and the spread of infection in long-term care homes.



Decorating

- Decorating your home and residents' rooms for the holidays is encouraged.
- Decorations should be cleanable or disposable and should not create clutter (cluttered areas may be missed during cleaning and disinfection).
- Decorations should be placed in non-clinical areas, such as lobbies, and low-touch areas (for example, high on walls), so that they are less likely to become contaminated while ensuring residents can still see and enjoy them.
- Decorations should not obstruct environmental cleaning and should be in accordance with fire regulations.
- Key items, such as alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers and personal protective equipment, must remain accessible and not hidden behind decorations.



Activities

- Group holiday-related activities are encouraged.
- [Provincial guidance](#) regarding activities must be followed.



Religious Services, Rites and Ceremonies

- Attending or practicing religious services, rites or ceremonies is an important part of the holiday season for many residents and should be encouraged and accommodated as much as possible.
- Any shared items should be cleaned and disinfected between residents' use.



Gifts and Care Packages

- Gifts and care packages from family and friends are encouraged.
- Remind family and friends that they should not prepare or send packages if they are ill.
- Remind residents and staff to clean their hands before and after handling gifts and care packages.
- Packages do not need to be cleaned and disinfected or held in storage before being distributed.