Coronavirus (COVID-19): Rules for Nursing Homes

▲ Read this only if you live in the state of Washington.

Are there special rules for nursing homes during this pandemic?

Yes. Things are changing fast. Check back for updates. We discuss here rules from Governor Inslee’s orders and guidance from the federal government.

Can residents have visitors?

Maybe.

Starting Aug. 12, your nursing home, assisted living facility or adult family home can apply to the state for approval to allow visitors under the “Safe Start for Long Term Care” plan.

- The first phase of the plan allows outdoor visits. These are limited to two a day. It also allows remote, window and compassionate-care visits.

- The second phase will allow some limited indoor visits. These are limited to certain circumstances where visits cannot be held remotely or outdoors.

▲ All long-term care facilities are currently in Phase 1.

Long-term care facilities will have phased re-openings. They will be based on their outbreak preparedness, and if no staff or residents have tested positive for coronavirus in the previous 28 days.

▲ You have the right to leave and come back if you have health care appointments off-site.
What are the rules around any permitted visits?

- Visits must take place in the resident’s room, a specially designated, “clean” room, or a designated outdoor area. This does not apply to end-of-life situations.
- Visitors must follow precautionary measures. These include, but are not limited to, wearing personal protective equipment such as facemasks and social distancing.
- Visitors must sign into a visitor’s log.
- Owners and operators must keep the visitor’s log for 30 days.
- Visitors and staff should use “hand hygiene.”

Do these rules cover assisted living facilities?

Yes.

Can Long-Term Care Ombuds conduct in-person visits again?

Yes. Long-term Care Ombuds advocate for residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities. They receive and resolve resident complaints involving quality of care, use of restraints, transfer and discharge from the facility, and abuse, neglect and other aspects of resident care and personal rights. Before starting visits back up, all local ombuds must complete special training as part of their preparation for visiting long-term care residents during COVID 19.

Contact the Long-Term Care Ombuds Program at 1-800-562-6028 if you have any questions or concerns.

Are staff being tested for COVID-19?

Yes. Nursing homes must regularly test staff, based on certain factors, and offer testing to residents.

What happens to a resident who tests positive for COVID-19?

The resident will be isolated from other residents. Staff will keep the person away from other people.
Can the nursing home tell other people about a resident’s condition?

No. Owners, operators, staff and volunteers cannot give out protected and confidential health information. There are some legal exceptions to this. It is okay to do so if the resident agrees to let them give out information.

The nursing home where I live won’t let us eat as a group anymore. They are having us eat in our rooms. Can they do this?

Yes. They can stop group meals and other group activities to help stop the spread of the virus.

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