

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. Effective March 18, 2021, **visits** at long-term care and nursing home facilities started again.

I am fully vaccinated. Does that make a difference?

Yes. **Indoor visits** are allowed for visitors or residents who are fully vaccinated.

Neither of us is fully vaccinated yet. Can I still visit my relative at the nursing home?

Yes. **Outdoor visits** are allowed at all times.

We can't get the vaccine any time soon. How long will I have to wait to visit inside with my relative?

It depends. You might be able to have indoor "**compassionate care visits**," whether or not either person is vaccinated, if you meet the criteria.

❖ **Compassionate Care Circumstances** include end-of-life situations and situations where a resident is struggling and would benefit from a visitor who would help address the resident's needs. Examples include grief, social withdrawal, or reluctance to eat or drink.

Does this mean things are starting to get back to normal?

Maybe. But indoor visits may have to temporarily stop again if either of these happens:

- Throughout the building, if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the building, until further assessment of the situation and a complete round of testing
- For an individual resident who tests positive for COVID-19

However, compassionate care visits can continue during that time.

What are the rules around any permitted visits?

- Visits can take place in the resident's room, a specially designated "clean" room, or a designated outdoor area. This is also true for compassionate care visits.
- Follow guidance for outdoor visitation.
- Visitors must follow safety 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."

Group Activities and Dining

Residents may eat in the same room with social distancing. Facilities should think about additional limitations based on status of COVID-19 infections in the facility.

Group activities may take place for residents who have fully recovered from COVID-19, and for those not in isolation for observation, or with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 status. There must be social distancing among residents, appropriate hand hygiene, and use of a face covering.

Facilities may be able to offer a variety of activities while also taking needed precautions. Book clubs, crafts, movies, exercise, and bingo can all take place with adjustments to prevent transmission.

Trips Away from the Facility

Residents may be asked to limit such trips away from the facility as much as they can. However, residents do still have the right to come and go as they wish.

Before and after trips into the community, residents may be assessed to ensure that the proper infection prevention procedures and risk mitigation activities are followed through.

Do these rules cover assisted living facilities?

Yes.

Can Long-Term Care Ombuds make in-person visits?

Yes. Long-term Care Ombuds support residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities. They look into 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. Ombuds are not considered visitors. They are allowed access to residents under all circumstances. They must follow proper infection control practices, screening, and wear the appropriate PPE for the status of the facility and the resident.

Call 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.

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