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.

**Are staff being screened for COVID-19?**
Yes. Workers and volunteers must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms when they start each shift.

**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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