

Visiting in nursing homes and other residential care facilities during COVID-19



Information for Residents and Visitors

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Visiting in nursing homes and other residential care facilities is very important to the health and wellbeing of residents and their families and friends. This leaflet gives information for residents and visitors about enjoying visits in a way that keeps the risk of COVID-19 as low as possible.

When someone is vaccine protected the chance of getting serious COVID-19 disease and of dying from COVID-19 is much lower. This means it is safer to have more visiting. But there is still a need to be careful because protection from the vaccine is not perfect, there is a high level of spread of COVID-19 in many parts of the country and the vaccine may not work very well against some types of the virus.

This leaflet is mainly about **indoor face-to-face visiting** in the nursing home or residential care facility. Other ways to keep in touch such as window visits, outdoor visits and telephone/video visits are very useful also. However these are **in addition to and not instead of** indoor visits in your room or another room in the building.

This leaflet is written mainly for residents. The information is also useful to visitors and staff. As a resident it is up to you to decide if you want to have visitors and who you want to have to visit you. There is a lot more detail in the updated HPSC [guidance](#) for visiting Long Term Residential Care Facilities (**version V2.1 23.04.2021**). We will continue to update the guidance as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic.

How often can I expect to see visitors?

If most people in your nursing home (about 8 out of 10) have been vaccinated you can now expect to have up to 4 visits per week with up to 2 people per visit.

Even if no one in the home has been vaccinated you should expect to be able to see one person twice a week.

If visits are not happening the nursing staff or the person in charge of the nursing home or residential care facility should talk to you about that and explain the reason why there is limited visiting and for how long this will go on.

If there are times when you are very ill or very upset and need extra visits you should talk to the nursing staff about how that can be arranged. You can also ask someone to talk to the nursing staff for you. If there are times when you don't want to see visitors or you only want to see some people but not others you should talk to the nursing staff.

How many different people can visit?

There is no limit to the number of different people who can visit you, but it is at most two at a time. If there are a large number of people you want to see they will need to take turns to visit you.

Can children visit?

Yes, if they are of school age, are supervised and can keep to the rules in the home.

How long can the visits be?

The home may ask the visitor to limit how long they stay to make sure there are not too many people visiting the nursing home at the same time and that there is time for everyone that wants visits to have them. The nursing staff will be able to tell you about this.

You should be able to see your visitor for a least an hour if you want to, but if you prefer a shorter visit that is OK. If you prefer a long visit that is also OK as long as the home is able to manage that along with the visits that other people need.

If I have not had the vaccine yet is it OK for me to see visitors?

Yes. The guidelines say visits are OK if you have not had the vaccine. If you have not had the vaccine the risk of seeing visitors for you is a higher than it is for people who took the vaccine. The risk is lower if your visitors are vaccinated. The risk is also lower for you if you already had COVID-19 in the last 6 months.

Are there times when people should not visit?

Your friends and family will need to stay away from the home

- if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 infection or of any other infection
- if they have been told they are a COVID-19 contact.

What do visitors have to do?

- Visitors have to contact the home to arrange the time of the visit.
- Visitors will have to sign in.
- Visitors will have to answer some questions and may have a temperature check when they arrive for the visit.
- Visitors have to clean their hands before they start the visit.
- During the visit your visitors will wear a surgical mask when moving around the nursing home and in shared areas. They do not have to wear gloves or aprons or gowns.
- If you and your visitor are both vaccine protected you do not have to wear a mask when you are alone together in your room or in another room during the visit. Visitors should clean their hands when they go into and out of the room.
- Visitors should not visit other people in the home when they come to see you and they need to follow the directions of the staff about coming into the building and leaving the building.

Can visitors bring in things for me?

Yes. There is no reason why they can't bring you books, papers, magazines pictures, keep-sakes or a favourite food.

Is it safe to go out for a drive or a visit home with a visitor?

If you and your visitor are both vaccine protected and most other people in the home are vaccine protected then going for a drive with that visitor should usually be OK. If you are leaving the car always follow the current public health advice about keeping distance from other people and attending to hand hygiene and masks. If you and your driver are both vaccine protected, you do not need to wear face coverings when alone together in the car. You do not need to stay in your room when you return from your drive.

What happens if there is an outbreak?

If there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in the home there may be very little visiting for a time but that should be based on advice from public health and visiting should start again as soon as practically possible.