

Ministry of Long-Term Care

Assistant Deputy Minister
Long-Term Care Operations

8th Floor, 438 University Ave.
Toronto ON M5G 2K8
Tel.: (416) 327-7461
Fax: (416) 327-7603

Ministère des Soins de longue durée

Sous-ministre adjointe
Opérations relatives aux soins de longue durée

438, avenue University, 8e étage
Toronto ON M5G 2K8
Téléphone: (416) 327-7461
Télécopieur: (416) 327-7603



March 4, 2024

MEMORANDUM TO: Long-Term Care Licensees

FROM: Christine Loureiro, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister
Long-Term Care Operations Division

SUBJECT: Update on Enhanced Masking Measures in Long-Term Care Homes

Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring the health and safety of residents, staff and caregivers in long-term care homes (LTCHs), especially over this challenging respiratory illness season.

Further to my memo dated November 2, 2023, on temporary enhanced masking measures in LTCHs, I am writing to provide you with an update on these measures.

The Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) has been working closely with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) to monitor and assess respiratory illness in the community and LTCHs, including reassessing enhanced masking measures currently in place in LTCHs.

Recent trends have shown continued decreases in community level transmission of COVID-19, flu and RSV, as well as decreases in outbreaks in LTCHs, with lower risk of severe illness and hospitalization amongst residents, and increased vaccination rates. While outbreaks can still be expected, we anticipate entering a lower risk period of respiratory illness than we have experienced over the past three months.

Based on the recent trends and projections, and the advice of OCMOH, **MLTC is ending the enhanced masking measures effective immediately.**

As required in the Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Standard and the updated MLTC COVID-19 guidance document, masking in non-outbreak situations in LTCHs continues to be:

- Required for staff, based on a point-of-care risk assessment before every resident interaction, and based on the return-to-work protocols;

- Staff may consider wearing a mask during prolonged direct resident care defined as one-on-one within two metres of an individual for fifteen minutes or longer; and
- Recommended for visitors and caregivers, but not required.

LTCHs continue to be required to follow all IPAC related requirements in the regulation and IPAC Standard and are encouraged to continue to strengthen foundational IPAC practices, employing multiple layers of protection, including:

- Continuing to build comprehensive IPAC programs as required by the IPAC Standard
- Encouraging residents, staff and caregivers to get vaccinated, as staying up to date with vaccines is the best way to prevent severe illness;
- Ensuring ready access to therapeutics and to pre-assess residents for eligibility for antivirals in advance;
- Self-monitoring for symptoms (i.e., passive screening) and staying home when sick;
- Ensuring that staff are trained to conduct a point-of-care risk assessment before each resident encounter and wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Ensuring you have adequate PPE supplies – please use the [PPE Supply Portal](#) for PPE and testing supplies and contact SCO.Supplies@ontario.ca or call at 1-888-444-9102 if you have any questions; and
- Conducting regular IPAC audits.

Please continue to work with your local public health unit on outbreak management, including universal masking during outbreaks, cohorting, isolation of cases, etc., as recommended in the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 Guidance for Public Health Units: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings](#).

Thank you again for your ongoing efforts to ensure resident safety and well-being while ensuring high quality of care within LTCHs. If you have any questions, please contact lrc.info@ontario.ca

Sincerely,



Christine Loureiro
Acting Assistant Deputy Minister
Long-Term Care Operations
Ministry of Long-Term Care

Attachments (1): COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long-Term Care Homes in Ontario

- c: Melissa Thomson, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC)
Peter Kaftarian, Interim Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health (MOH)
Kelly McAslan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Operations (MLTC)
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health
Elizabeth Walker, Executive Lead, Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, MOH

Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario
Donna Duncan, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Long Term Care Association
Lindsey Jones, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Michael Jacek, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Michael Sherar, President and CEO, Public Health Ontario
Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health
Cynthia Martineau, CEO, Home and Community Care Support Services
Dee Tripp, Executive Director, Ontario Association of Residents' Councils
Samantha Peck, Executive Director, Family Councils Ontario