

Visiting Your Loved One in Long-Term Care: What is Permitted in Phase 5

Effective October 4, 2021/updated October 21, 2021

COVID-19 has changed the way long-term care facilities accept visitors. Phase 5 brings fewer restrictions on visitors and residents in long-term care, along with a new requirement for visitors to show proof of vaccination.

The information below is based upon the Long-Term Care Directive which is found at <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/ccs/documents/COVID-19-Management-in-Long-Term-Care-Facilities-Directive.pdf>

If you have any questions, please contact your long-term care facility.

Proof of vaccination

From October 4, 2021, all visitors must provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19, in accordance with the facility's proof of vaccination policy (this may include proof of medical exception and a request to show government ID). In addition to medical exceptions, there are limited exceptions for compassionate or end of life visitors which can be discussed with the facility administration.

Proof of vaccination is different for Designated Caregivers and Volunteers. They are strongly encouraged, but not currently required, to be fully vaccinated and show proof of vaccination starting October 4, 2021. However, after November 30, 2021, they will be required to provide proof of vaccination.

Proof of vaccination is not required for children 11 and younger (they can visit with a fully vaccinated adult or on their own).

Residents are strongly encouraged, but not required, to be fully vaccinated.

Staying safe

Families can help ensure a safe visit with their loved one, by following public health measures such as physical distancing, keeping your hands clean, observing cough and sneeze etiquette, cleaning and disinfecting, and wearing a mask. For more information please visit <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/avoiding-infection/>

Visitors may visit

We recognize the importance of visits from family and friends. However, visits must be done in a way that ensures everyone's safety.

- Visitors must show proof of vaccination to enter the long-term care facility.
- Visitors must wear a medical mask, which may be removed only to eat or drink, and when distanced from other residents and staff. The medical mask will be provided by the facility. Residents are encouraged, but are not required, to wear a mask, especially when they are not physically distanced from their visitor(s).
- Visitors may attend social activities and group mealtimes with their loved one, subject to facility policy.
- Visits may take place anywhere in the long-term care facility, subject to facility policy.
- Children may visit with residents if accompanied by an adult, subject to facility policy.
- Facilities may implement scheduling of visits, as needed.
- Residents may not have social visitors if the resident is in isolation because they are a) symptomatic and being tested, or b) they are a new admission and are required to isolate. Note, Designated Caregivers are still permitted to attend these residents.

Designated Caregivers

A Designated Caregiver is a special kind of visitor. A Designated Caregiver is a family member and/or support person who has been regularly involved in the resident's life, supporting their health and well-being prior to COVID-19. Designated Caregivers are considered essential. They are designated by the resident or their substitute decision maker and the facility. Some of the responsibilities of a Designated Caregiver are:

- Helping with movement, feeding, dressing and grooming
- Helping with communication
- Supporting a resident's mental health and emotional well-being, or
- Supporting a resident's participation in indoor/outdoor visits, walks, social activities, or going to off-site visits

A Designated Caregiver is permitted to have daily access, even when the resident is isolating because they are symptomatic and being tested, or they are a new admission and are required to isolate.

There is no limit on the number of persons who can be identified as a Designated Caregiver, or visit at the same time (subject to facility policy).

Vaccination against COVID-19 is strongly recommended for Designated Caregivers, but currently is not a requirement in order to visit and provide caregiving support. However, after November 30, 2021, they will be asked to provide proof of vaccination.

How residents may access the community

Residents may leave their facility:

- Residents may now be away from the facility to visit or stay with family, friends, or a Designated Caregiver, for up to 30 days. This includes overnight visits or stays at a family home, a cottage, camping, hotel, etc.
- Residents may visit a resident in another long-term care facility, although they will be asked to provide proof of vaccination before entering.
- Residents may travel within Canada only. Travel outside Canada is not permitted.
- Residents are subject to the same travel restrictions as any other Nova Scotian, including any border restrictions.

The following applies to all home visits:

- Others may visit the home while the resident is present.
- It is strongly recommended that all eligible members of the home being visited are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Residents are strongly recommended to maintain physical distancing from others, except with the person(s) accompanying them. Residents are strongly recommended to minimize close contact with non-family/friends.
- Residents and others are strongly encouraged to wear a mask, especially when they are not physically distanced from others.

Residents may also leave their facility for:

- A walk off the facility grounds.
- An outing to outdoor boardwalks, parks, etc., and indoor destinations such as retail stores, restaurants, banks, etc. The resident must maintain physical distancing (except with the person accompanying them).

- Attendance at adult day programs, work and school (subject to the destination's vaccination policy.)
- Medical/dental appointments.
- Sightseeing drives organized by the facility, or with a resident's Designated Caregivers, or with a family member or friend. Drive-throughs and stops at parks, and indoor destinations such as restaurants, retail stores, and family homes are permitted.
- Residents may leave the facility for these destinations with a family member, friend, or Designated Caregiver, or independently, if the resident and facility care team agree that it is safe.

Note, during any visit to the community, the resident may be asked to provide proof of vaccination to participate in discretionary, non-essential events and activities that gather people together (like going to restaurants, movies, social events, etc.) More information can be found in the Vaccination Protocols: [COVID-19 Protocol for Proof of Full Vaccination for Events and Activities \(PDF\)](#) and [COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination Protocol in High-Risk Settings](#).