

Minister's Directive: COVID-19: LONG-TERM CARE HOME SURVEILLANCE TESTING AND ACCESS TO HOMES

Effective May 21st, 2021

Ministry of Long-Term Care

Minister's Directive: **COVID-19: Long-Term Care Home Surveillance Testing and Access to Homes**

This Minister's Directive is issued pursuant to s. 174.1 of the *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007* (Act), which authorizes the Minister of Long-Term Care to issue operational or policy directives respecting long-term care homes where the Minister considers it in the public interest to do so. Every Licensee shall carry out every operational or policy directive that applies to the long-term care home.

This Directive is effective as of May 21, 2021. This Directive updates and replaces the previous version of this Directive dated March 15, 2021.

This Directive relates to surveillance testing and access to long-term care homes that are not experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19. Additional measures apply in an outbreak situation, including measures as per local public health direction and measures contained in Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Definitions

All terms in this Directive have the same meaning as under the Act and Ontario Regulation 79/10 under the Act, unless otherwise defined.

The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Directive:

Antigen Test means a point-of-care rapid antigen test for the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19 where the test kit has been obtained from Ontario Health and is taken in accordance with Rapid Antigen Screening Guidance.

Caregiver has the same meaning as in the Ministry of Long-Term Care's COVID-19 Visiting Policy effective May 22, 2021 or as amended.

Directive #3 means Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes under the *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007* issued under section 77.7 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA), R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7, by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, as amended from time to time.

General Visitor has the same meaning as in the Ministry of Long-Term Care's COVID-19 Visiting Policy effective May 22, 2021 or as amended.

Licensee has the same meaning as under the Act.

Ontario Health means the corporation continued under section 3 of the *Connecting Care Act, 2019*.

PCR Test means a validated real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay laboratory test for the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19.

Rapid Antigen Screening Guidance means the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 Guidance: Considerations for Antigen Point-of-Care Testing](#), effective March 19, 2021 or as amended, with the exclusion of the Frequency of Antigen POCT provisions.

Regulated Health Profession has the same meaning as under Ontario Regulation 79/10.

Student Placement means a person working in the long-term care home as part of a clinical placement requirement of an educational program of a college or university, who does not meet the definition of "Staff" or "Volunteer".

Staff has the same meaning as under the Act.

Support Worker has the same meaning as in the Ministry of Long-Term Care's [COVID-19 Visiting Policy](#), effective May 22, 2021 or as amended.

Volunteer has the same meaning as under the Act.

I hereby issue the following Directive with respect to every long-term care home:

1. Test Frequency. Every Licensee shall ensure that:

1.1 Staff, Caregivers, Student Placements and Volunteers. Subject to the exceptions in section 3 and 4 of this Directive, as applicable, every Licensee shall ensure that all Staff, Caregivers, Student Placements and Volunteers working in or visiting a long-term care home take:

- a. One PCR Test and one Antigen Test on separate days within a seven-day period. The time period between PCR testing should be as close to seven days as can practically be achieved; or
- b. An Antigen Test at a frequency set out in the Ministry of Health [COVID-19 Guidance: Considerations for Antigen Point-of-Care Testing](#) effective March 19, 2021 or as amended, at a minimum.

1.1.1 Occasional Entry. Despite section 1.1, where a Staff, Caregiver, Student Placement or Volunteer enters a long-term care home only once within a seven-day period, the Licensee shall ensure that the Staff, Caregiver, Student Placement or Volunteer takes an Antigen Test on that day.

1.1.2 **Occasional Entry (Consecutive Days)**. Despite section 1.1, where a Staff, Caregiver, Student Placement or Volunteer only enters a long-term care home on two consecutive days within a seven day period and takes an Antigen Test on the first day, the Licensee may permit entry on the second consecutive day without requiring an Antigen Test.

1.1.3 **Exception, Certain Homes**. Despite section 1.1. the long-term care homes set out in the Table to this section are exempt from the requirement for an Antigen Test set out in section 1.1 (a) for Staff, Caregivers, Student Placements and Volunteers who have received at least a first dose of an mRNA vaccine for COVID-19 and 14 days have passed since the first dose was administered.

Item	Long-Term Care Home
1	The Jewish Home for the Aged, Toronto
2	Providence Healthcare, Toronto

1.2 **Support Workers**. Subject to the exceptions in sections 3 and 4 of this Directive, every Licensee shall ensure that all Support Workers demonstrate that they have received a negative COVID-19 test result from an Antigen Test on the day of the visit or demonstrate proof that they received a negative Antigen Test from an Antigen Test that was taken on the previous day before granting them full entry into a home as a visitor.

1.3 **General Visitors**. Subject to the exceptions in sections 3 and 4 of this Directive, every Licensee shall ensure that for all General Visitors visiting a long-term care home where permitted based on [Directive #3](#), demonstrate that they have received a negative Antigen Test on the day of the visit or demonstrate proof that they received a negative Antigen Test from an Antigen Test taken on the previous day before granting them full entry into a home as a visitor.

2. Testing Timing.

2.1 **Staff, Student Placements and Volunteers**. Where a Staff, Student Placement or Volunteer takes:

- i. an Antigen Test at the long-term care home, the Licensee shall ensure that the test is taken as soon as possible after beginning a shift and may enter with appropriate personal protective equipment as per [Directive #3](#) and following infection prevention and control in place upon entry to the home; or

- ii. a PCR Test, every Licensee shall ensure that the individual demonstrates that they have received a negative COVID-19 test result, before granting them entry.

2.2 Caregivers. Where a Caregiver takes a PCR Test, every Licensee shall ensure that the Caregiver demonstrates that they have received a negative COVID-19 test result, before granting them full entry into a home as a visitor. Where a Caregiver takes an Antigen Test at the long-term care home, every Licensee shall ensure that the test is taken before granting them full entry into the long-term care home; however, the Licensee may allow the Caregiver to proceed to the resident's room with appropriate personal protective equipment as per Directive #3 and following infection prevention and control practices pending the Antigen Test results.

2.3 Support Workers and General Visitors. Subject to the exception in section 2.4 for certain Support Workers, every Licensee shall ensure that Support Workers and General Visitors (where permitted) are tested and demonstrate a negative Antigen Test as per the requirements in section 1 above before granting them entry to the home.

2.4 Support Workers who are Regulated Health Professionals. Despite the requirement in sections 2.3, where a Support Worker who is a member of a Regulated Health Profession takes an Antigen Test at the long-term care home, the Licensee shall ensure that the test is taken before granting them full entry into the long-term care home; however, the Regulated Health Profession Support Worker may gain entry to the home pending the test results with appropriate personal protective equipment as per Directive #3. and following infection prevention and control practices. For clarity, the Antigen Test frequency in section 1.2 continues to apply to Support Workers who are members of a Regulated Health Profession.

3. Previous COVID-19. Despite the requirements set out in sections 1 and 2 of this Directive, an individual who has previously had laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 and was cleared by the local public health unit, should not be re-tested except:

- a. with new onset of signs or symptoms of COVID-19, and
- b. can be considered:
 - i. if there is exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19;
 - ii. if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the home; or
 - iii. at the direction of the local public health unit.

4. Palliative and Emergency Situations. Despite the requirements set out in sections 1 and 2 of this Directive, the requirements for Support Workers, Caregivers and General Visitors do not need to be followed in an emergency or palliative situations, subject to any restrictions or requirements contained in Directive #3.

5. **Inspectors.** This Directive does not apply to inspectors with a statutory right of entry.
6. **Outbreak.** For Licensees of long-term care homes that were in outbreak on or between February 16th and March 14th, 2021 such Licensees may continue to follow the applicable testing requirements in the February 16th, 2021 version of the Minister's Directive for up to 3 weeks from the time the outbreak has resolved. After such time the Licensee shall commence testing under the March 15th, 2021 version of this Minister's Directive.
7. **Access Subject to Requirements.** Subject to the exceptions set out in sections 3, and 1.1.3 of this Directive, every Licensee shall ensure that no person described in sections 1 and 2, of this Directive enters the home unless the requirements contained in this Directive have been met, regardless of the person's COVID-19 immunization status.
8. **Requirement to Demonstrate Proof of Negative Antigen Test.** Where a Staff, Caregiver, Student Placement, Volunteer, Support Worker or General Visitor received an Antigen Test not onsite at the long-term care home, on that day or the previous day, every Licensee shall ensure that the Staff, Caregiver, Student Placement, Volunteer, Support Worker or General Visitor provides proof of the negative Antigen Test result in order gain entry to the home or take a new Antigen Test. The Licensee shall maintain a log that such proof has been demonstrated.
9. **Statistical Information.** Every Licensee shall collect, maintain and disclose statistical information on testing as follows:
- a. Documentation that includes (collectively, "the Statistical Information"):
 - i. the number of Staff, Caregivers, Student Placements, Volunteers, Support Workers, and General Visitors tested with an Antigen Test;
 - ii. the number of Staff, Caregivers, Student Placements, and Volunteers tested with a PCR Test and date it was presented at the home;
 - iii. the number of Caregivers, Support Workers and General Visitors who were permitted entry under an emergency or palliative situation in accordance with section 4;
 - iv. the number of Staff, Caregivers, Student Placements, Volunteers, Support Workers, and General Visitors that provided proof of a negative Antigen Test to gain entry.
 - b. Upon request, disclose the Statistical Information to the Ministry of Long-Term Care, the public health unit for the area in which the long-term care home is located and to Ontario Health.
10. **Prohibition on reselling or distributing to any other person.** Every Licensee shall ensure that an Antigen Test is:
- used only for the purposes of the provincial antigen screening program; and
 - not resold or distributed to any other person.