



March 13, 2020

RHRA Clarifies Expectations for Retirement Homes Regarding Active Screening for COVID-19

The situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic is evolving at an unprecedented pace. We know that elderly people are at highest risk when it comes to the effects of the disease. To this end, the RHRA is aligning its COVID-19 response with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care to ensure clear and consistent communication and action. In this context, RHRA is clarifying its expectations related to implementing the following practices as part of the COVID-19 response efforts.*

Active Screening Required for Staff and Visitors

In alignment with the Ministry of Long-Term Care's instruction to all Ontario long-term care homes, retirement homes must conduct **active screening of all staff, students, volunteers and visitors.** **ANYONE** who fails any part of the screening process will not be allowed in the home and advised to contact Telehealth or their public health unit.

- Homes are being asked to have a screener at the home's entrance to conduct the active screening during business hours. Outside of these times, the home's charge nurse/administrator should develop processes and procedures to ensure that all people entering the home are screened and visits are logged. These procedures are to apply seven days a week 24 hours a day.

- Retirement homes should instruct all staff, students and volunteers to self-screen for COVID-19 at home. All staff, students and volunteers with symptoms of an acute respiratory infection must not come to work and must report their symptoms to the retirement home. All staff should be aware of early signs and symptoms of acute respiratory infection (such as fever, cough or shortness of breath).
- See the [“self-monitoring” information](#) for further guidance.
- See the latest [case definition](#), as well as the up-to-date [COVID-19 Affected Areas List](#).

Active Screening Required for Residents

Retirement homes must actively screen all resident admissions, re-admissions and returning residents. ANYONE who fails any part of the screening process will be placed in isolation.

- Retirement homes must consult with the local public health unit and the resident’s primary care provider if residents exhibit symptoms or have had exposure to or if there has been confirmation of transmission of COVID-19, in order to determine any additional public health or clinical actions.
- See the latest [case definition](#), as well as the up-to-date [COVID-19 Affected Areas List](#).

In addition to active screening, retirement homes should follow the guidance for respiratory outbreak and COVID-19 prevention from the Ministry of Health. This includes prevention activities such as:

Posting signage and advising visitors who have travelled to affected areas or been exposed to a case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days to postpone their visit.

- Posting signage and advising all visitors who are ill to postpone their visit.
- Ensuring availability and accessibility of hand hygiene throughout the facility.
- Keeping staff and residents informed on COVID-19.
- Reminding staff to be monitoring themselves for illness and to stay at home when they are sick. Developing policies for managing staff who may have been exposed to a case of COVID-19.
- Assessing incoming residents for respiratory symptoms and potential exposures to COVID-19. Monitoring residents for new respiratory symptoms or fever.

- Quickly identifying and isolating any resident with acute respiratory illness or fever.
- Ensuring signage is clear and that personal protective equipment (gowns, gloves, masks and eye protection) for health care workers are available and accessible for care of patients with acute respiratory illness.
- Helping visitors with personal protective equipment if they are visiting residents under precautions.
- Reporting any suspected COVID-19 illness in residents or staff to the local public health unit.

Please refer to the RHRA's [COVID-19 web page](#) for additional resources and information. As new information becomes available, we will continue to share it with you.

We recognize you may have questions about the specifics of active screening and compliance generally in the context of this outbreak. We will continue to work in partnership with the sector to help support retirement homes and to protect the vulnerable residents we collectively serve. We encourage retirement homes to review your infection prevention and control procedures with your staff as well as the information provided above.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at 1-855-ASK-RHRA or at info@rhra.ca.

*The Retirement Homes Act requires retirement homes to comply with safety standards including with respect to fire, safety and public health requirements (Sec. 60(3)) and also to use prevailing practices for screening for infectious diseases (regulation section 27 (8)(d)). The RHRA considers that failure to follow the steps above jeopardizes a resident's health safety or well-being.