

VARIATION BETWEEN PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS & PCH GUIDANCE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why are Personal Care Homes (PCHs) following guidelines that may be different than what is recommended/required by public health orders that apply to the public?

Public Health identifies personal care homes as a setting with high risk or vulnerable populations. Personal Care Home residents are generally older, with pre-existing medical conditions and live in shared spaces. These put them at risk for more severe disease and higher mortality than the general public if infected with COVID-19.

Manitoba's health system, including licensed personal care homes, work closely with Public Health to ensure all appropriate precautions are in place to protect the health of high risk or vulnerable populations. Public health orders do not apply "to a facility where health care or social services" are provided and specific guidance has been implemented, regularly reviewed and updated throughout the pandemic to keep this population protected.

NOTE: Guidance is regularly being updated as new, highly infectious, variants are identified. We are closely monitoring the emergence of the Omicron variant, which may impact your ability to visit our facility or participate in a resident's social leave.

Information can change quickly and we appreciate your cooperation as we share updated guidance or make necessary changes to protect the health and safety of residents over the coming weeks.

2. Residents are now vaccinated, so why do PCHs continue to need these guidelines?

Vaccines add significant protection from COVID, but they do not result in zero risk, particularly as rates of COVID in the community may increase and new variants emerge.

With high vaccination rates in PCH, guidance has been updated to permit a number of activities that residents are now able to enjoy/resume with less risk. This includes: social outings, and the ability to entertain general visitors in their room.

Although vaccines add protection, public health guidance still requires caution in confined spaces, in crowds, and in close contact with others. In a congregate setting, such as a personal care home, it is more challenging for residents to physically distance from one another. Individuals may still be able to carry the virus and may be able to spread it to others, even if they are vaccinated and/or not showing any symptoms. The actions and illnesses of one resident can impact all others residents in the facility more so than if the resident was residing in their own home.

Physical distancing, hand hygiene and appropriate use of personal protective equipment, such as masks and eye protection, continue to be necessary to keep PCH residents safe.

3. Why is physical distancing still necessary between residents if they are fully vaccinated?

Vaccinated individuals may still be able to carry the virus and may be able to spread it to others. Physical distancing is a strategy to mitigate and reduce the potential risk of spread of COVID-19.

4. Why are group sizes in the public different than what is allowed in a PCH?

Current *Public Health Orders* provide exceptions for facilities, including PCHs, where health care or social services are provided. The group sizes for residents and their visitors are outlined in the [LTC Resident Visitation Principles](#).

Group sizes can vary and are dependent on COVID-19 activity and pandemic level (which is determined by the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer), as well as the amount of space and support available at the site to allow for physical distancing.

Recreation activities follow Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines, including physical distancing of 2 meters/6 feet between residents and staff. The size of the group will be dependent on the amount of space and support at the site to allow for physical distancing.

5. Why are visitors (vaccinated and unvaccinated) not able to come and go from PCHs as they please (e.g. any hours, any days)?

COVID-19 remains a threat to PCH residents who may be more vulnerable to serious illness if they contract the virus. To minimize the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks in Personal Care Homes, Resident Visitation Principles remain in place but have been updated to allow for additional visitation options for visitors (and residents) who are fully vaccinated.

The number of visitors a resident can have varies, and is dependent on COVID-19 activity and pandemic level (which is determined by the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer) and the amount of space available at the site to allow for physical distancing.

Visiting hours and the number of visitors permitted are determined by individual facility operators, in order to ensure they have the resources available to manage visits safely.

6. Why are fully vaccinated residents recommended against going on outings to multiple locations at one time (e.g., shopping trips to multiple stores)?

The more contacts an individual has, and the more time an individual spends in close proximity with others, the more opportunity there is for exposure to COVID-19.

In an effort to keep all PCH residents as safe as possible, residents who leave the facility for a social outing are recommended to travel directly to their destination and back to the facility.

7. Why are fully vaccinated residents recommended against participating in overnight stays away from the PCH?

The more contacts an individual has, and the more time an individual spends in close proximity with others (even those fully vaccinated), the more opportunity there is for exposure to COVID-19. In an effort to keep all PCH residents as safe as possible, it is

recommended that fully vaccinated residents who are out with a fully vaccinated driver return from a social leave pass before the end of the day.

8. For special celebrations and gatherings, can exceptions be made for visitation and outings?

All guidelines are necessary while there is still a threat of COVID-19 in our communities. For holidays, and for any milestone or significant events, we encourage families to consider how they will celebrate in a manner that respects the guidelines. PCHs are happy to work with families to be as accommodating as possible while still respecting vaccination status of the resident and family, group size, physical distancing and visitation guidelines.

9. Why are masks and physical distancing strongly encouraged during visits that occur outdoors?

Masks and physical distancing are still strongly encouraged as additional protection for PCH residents, even if they are fully vaccinated as an additional protection for residents (who are considered more vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19 than the general population).

10. Why are designated family caregivers now required to be fully vaccinated?

With COVID-19 activity on the rise and the presence of highly transmissible variants in our communities, requiring designated family caregivers to be fully vaccinated is an additional measure to protect the safety of our residents and health care workers.

11. Most PCH residents are fully vaccinated which is supposed to protect them from the virus so why does it matter if I'm vaccinated?

PCH residents remain vulnerable to severe illness if they become infected with COVID-19. We are also making efforts to provide all PCH residents with a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as an additional "booster" of protection. Vaccination is an effective tool in preventing the most serious illness and is an important factor in preventing the spread of the virus from an individual who may not have symptoms but who is infected with – and unknowingly spreading – the virus. Breakthrough infections remain possible, however, particularly as COVID-19 activity in the community increases.

12. I am not vaccinated, but I'm willing to get tested. Can I provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test in order to continue as a designated family caregiver?

No. Only fully vaccinated designated care providers can continue in that role.

13. I am a fully vaccinated designated family caregiver or visitor. Why do I need to wear personal protective equipment when I visit?

Vaccinated individuals may still be able to carry the virus and may be able to spread it to others. Personal protective equipment (masks and eyewear) are proven effective at preventing and reducing the spread of COVID-19. PPE continues to be required as an additional protection for PCH residents.

14. Why do fully vaccinated General Visitors have to maintain physical distancing when visiting? Why is this different from the requirements of Designated Family Caregivers?

Physical distancing of 2 meters/6 feet, continues to be recommended whenever possible, including for designated family caregivers. As important partners in the care of PCH residents, designated family caregivers often perform tasks that make physical distancing not possible. They are therefore provided with additional personal protective equipment (medical/procedure mask and eye protection) and education in infection prevention and control as protection for moments and tasks when maintaining physical distancing is not possible.

15. Why do volunteers need to show proof of vaccination to be able to work at more than one PCH?

Volunteers are included in the Public Health Order that restricts staff movement among more than one PCH. For volunteers who wish to work at more than one PCH, these orders require proof of vaccination.