



Information about COVID-19 Vaccination in Long-term Care Facilities

1/22/2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected long-term care (LTC) facilities more than other settings, with large case numbers and high death rates. It is up to all of us to protect those who live and work in these settings by getting vaccinated and following public health recommendations that can reduce the spread and impact of the virus.

Working together, we have helped prevent the spread of COVID-19 through effective infection prevention and control practices, accessible testing, effective use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and statewide and community-specific policies to limit activities that contribute to high levels of virus spread. Now, with vaccination rolling out in long-term care facilities, we are entering a promising new phase in our response. Vaccination is the safest way to reach the levels of protection and immunity we need in order to end this pandemic. The availability of new vaccines brings new questions about the role and value of COVID-19 vaccination for long-term care health care workers and residents, and what the implications are for activities long-term care facilities have been implementing to control spread.

Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccination protects you and the residents in your care from COVID-19 and its complications. It also lowers rates of disease in your community. Most people who have COVID-19 will recover. However, the risk of severe illness and death is higher for older people and for those with certain underlying health conditions. Also, in some cases even younger, healthy people have developed serious complications and died. In addition, the long-term health effects of the disease are not yet fully understood. Although people who work in long-term care may be less likely than residents to have complications from COVID-19, by practicing preventive measures, including vaccination, they are helping to keep COVID-19 out of the facility and away from vulnerable residents.

Long-term care residents are particularly vulnerable and have disproportionately high rates of illness, complications, and death associated with COVID-19. It is also easy for the virus that causes COVID-19 to move quickly and widely through long-term care facilities.

The ability of long-term care facilities to welcome outside visitors is impacted by spread of COVID-19 in the community; facilities in counties with high positivity rates (greater than 10%), or with recent cases in

residents or health care workers, are unable to allow visitors into the facility to spend time with loved ones, beyond compassionate care visits. That means that COVID-19 vaccination is critically important to residents' quality of life, by helping to enable visitation.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) resources for COVID-19 vaccination in long-term care facilities:

- [Importance of COVID-19 Vaccination for Residents of Long-term Care Facilities](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/LTCF-residents.html)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/LTCF-residents.html>)
- [LTCF Toolkit: Preparing for COVID-19 Vaccination at Your Facility](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/index.html)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/index.html>)
- [Preparing LTCF Staff for COVID-19 Vaccination](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/prepare-staff.html)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/prepare-staff.html>)
- [Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination in LTCFs](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/faqs.html)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/faqs.html>)

How COVID-19 response will change in LTC after vaccination

Vaccines are powerful tools in the fight against COVID-19 in long-term care facilities. We hope to see enough people vaccinated to greatly reduce COVID-19 disease. That could mean stepping back from the intense infection control measures that are currently in place. However, until that happens, everyone who has received one or both vaccine doses must continue to carry out the same preventive measures in the community as they did before vaccination: Wear masks and other personal protective equipment, social distance, and use good hand hygiene. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) anticipates changes in recommendations for testing, screening, personal protective equipment use, isolation/quarantine, and visitation for long-term care facilities from CDC and other national partners; however, it will take some time to develop and put these changes in place. MDH will communicate these changes as soon as possible to the long-term care community. Until that time, continue to follow current guidance.

Why infection control measures cannot change as soon as people are vaccinated

Before CDC or MDH recommendations can change, we need to learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide after a full vaccine series is completed. We do not know yet if, or the rate at which, people may still get infected after they are vaccinated, or if they can spread the virus without feeling sick or having symptoms. Because not all members of the community have had COVID-19, and even fewer have been vaccinated, many residents in supervised group living and health care workers may still be at risk for infection. Until we know that vaccinated health care workers and residents cannot spread the virus to others, the following measures should be followed.

Isolation and quarantine

At this point, isolation and quarantine recommendations for health care workers and residents have not changed, even if the person has received one or two doses of COVID-19 vaccine. This includes quarantine for health care workers and residents after an exposure, and residents after admission to the facility.

- [COVID-19 Recommendations for Health Care Workers](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hcwrecs.pdf)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hcwrecs.pdf>)

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Until more data is collected, and CDC updates its guidance, all health care workers and community members must continue to take the same preventive measures as they did prior to vaccination (i.e., wearing a mask in the community, social distancing, hand hygiene). These measures are intended to protect others as well as yourself. Health care workers must continue to follow current state and federal guidelines for correct use of personal protective equipment in the workplace.

Testing

Testing should continue as currently recommended by state or federal guidelines, regardless of vaccination status for individual residents or health care workers or of the proportion of people vaccinated in the facility.

- Test all residents and health care workers with symptoms.
- Continue routine testing of health care workers at the frequency dictated by the percentage of people in the county who test positive for the virus among those who have been tested overall (positivity rate).
- Perform outbreak testing when a new COVID-19 infection is found in a resident, health care worker, or a visiting service provider that worked in the facility while infectious. Rounds of outbreak testing should be repeated every three to seven days, until no new cases of COVID-19 infection are found in health care workers or residents for at least 14 days.
- [MDH, COVID-19 Testing Recommendations for Long-term Care Facilities](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lctctestrec.pdf)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lctctestrec.pdf>)
- [QSO-20-38-NH](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-38-nh.pdf) (<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-38-nh.pdf>)

Screening

Screening residents, health care workers, and visitors for signs and symptoms of illness should continue, even after vaccination. There have been no changes to recommendations for screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in health care facilities, including long-term care facilities. No health care worker should work with fever or symptoms of acute illness, regardless of whether it is caused by COVID-19 or another illness.

- [CDC, Post Vaccine Considerations for Healthcare Personnel](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/post-vaccine-considerations-healthcare-personnel.html)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/post-vaccine-considerations-healthcare-personnel.html>)

Visitation

Facilities need to continue to follow MDH and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) guidance around visitation. Facilities where someone has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days, or in counties where more than 10% of all people tested in a 14-day period test positive for the virus, must not allow broad visitation outside of compassionate care visits, regardless of vaccination status of health care workers, residents, and visitors.

- [Minnesota Home Care Provider/Assisted Living Visitation and Activities Guidance Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lcvisit.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/lcvisit.pdf>)
- [COVID-19 Guidance: Nursing Home Visitation and Activity Restriction Modifications](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/nhvisit.pdf)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/nhvisit.pdf>)

Where to direct questions

Provider line: 651-201-5414, option 3

Health care providers or clinicians with general questions about vaccine or concerns outside of what is listed above.



Minnesota Department of Health | health.mn.gov | 651-201-5000
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Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.