

Role of Toronto Public Health in Long-Term Care Homes during the COVID-19 Outbreak

Background

All Long-Term Care Homes (LTCH) in Ontario are part of the provincial health care system, and are licensed, regulated and inspected by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. The majority of LTCHs in Toronto are operated privately, some are non-profit, and a small portion (10) are City-run, not-for-profit facilities.

Managing Infectious Disease Outbreaks in LTCHs

During any infectious disease outbreak in a LTCH it is important to institute measures to prevent and control the spread of the infection in the facility, while balancing the daily life of the residents in the LTCH. Usually, when an outbreak is declared in a particular unit or floor, infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures are implemented in that area to prevent the spread to other areas of the building.

Toronto Public Health's Role

When a LTCH has one reported a positive case of COVID-19, an outbreak is declared and a Toronto Public Health (TPH) investigator is assigned to work with the facility to ensure outbreak control measures are put in place, in accordance with provincial guidelines.

Toronto Public Health:

- Investigates positive cases of COVID-19 and their contacts.
- Provides recommendations for testing of residents and staff according to the current Ministry of Health guidelines (all residents and staff on floors with a COVID-19 outbreak are to be tested, whether or not they have symptoms).
- Provides COVID-19 test swabs, and links facilities to obtain provincial Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies, if needed.

Toronto Public Health works with the LTCH to implement:

- Twice a day screening of residents and staff to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms, and to identify new infections as early as possible.
- Changing visitor policies to reduce the possibility of visitors inadvertently bringing the virus into these settings.
- Physical distancing measures, and the cancellation of all group activities.
- Enhanced cleaning, particularly for frequently touched surfaces.

Toronto Public Health continues to support LTCHs throughout the outbreak to ensure that all prevention and control measures are in place.

Province of Ontario's Role

The Ministry of Long-Term Care has the responsibility to regulate, license and inspect LTCHs. The [Long-Term Care Home Quality Inspection Program \(LQIP\)](#) safeguards residents' well-being by investigating complaints and critical incidents, and by ensuring that all LTCHs are inspected at least once per year. Inspection reports for homes are available [here](#).

The Ministry of Health has been providing direction to LTCHs homes on the management of COVID-19 cases and outbreaks. This includes issuing directives detailing guidance and requirements specific to LTCHs. The Ministry is also the lead for arranging PPE, and providing laboratory testing for COVID-19 in these settings.

Contact Information for Families with Loved Ones in LTCH

Concerned families and friends should communicate directly with the LTCH about their loved ones at the facility. They can also call the Ministry of Long-Term Care's COVID-19 telephone line, which is available seven days a week, at 1-866-434-0144.

More information

For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.