

## VARIATION BETWEEN PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS & PCH GUIDANCE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**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?**

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.

Public Health identifies long term care as a setting with high risk or vulnerable populations and public health orders do not apply “to a facility where health care or social services” are provided. Throughout the pandemic specific guidance has been followed to keep this population protected.

**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. With high vaccination rates in PCHs, there are a number of activities that residents are now able to enjoy/resume with less risk, such as 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. 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.

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 aren't visitors (vaccinated and unvaccinated) allowed 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 Long Term Care, resident visitation principles remain in place.

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 not able to go 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 masks and physical distancing still required 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).

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

Personal protective equipment (masks and eyewear) is effective at preventing and reducing the spread of COVID-19 and continues to be required as an additional protection for PCH residents.

**9. 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 (level 1 mask and eye protection) and education in infection prevention and control as protection for moments and tasks when maintaining physical distancing is not possible.

**10. 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.