

# COVID-19 Update

## Q&A: COVID-19 case and contact management in long-term care, VCH

**Q:** Why is Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) changing its approach to COVID-19 case and contact management in long-term care (LTC) at this time?

**A:** While we are seeing infections in LTC, serious illness and hospitalizations in the LTC resident population remains low, especially in highly immunized populations such as those in LTC. British Columbia has one of the highest rates of immunization in the world, and the booster program for third doses has been offered to all residents and staff of LTC homes in VCH with very high uptake.

**Q:** How has the definition of an outbreak changed?

**A:** Outbreaks at LTC homes in VCH will no longer be based on case counts alone. The Medical Health Officer will take into account factors such as the rate of vaccination in the home, the severity of illness, and operational considerations, and make a decision specific to the situation.

**Q:** Why has the definition of an outbreak changed?

**A:** The overall protection and promotion of LTC resident health is the top priority, and this requires consideration of the harms and benefits of both COVID-19 and related interventions. Due to current low rates of serious illness among vaccinated people infected with COVID-19, the number of cases diagnosed among residents or staff alone is no longer the trigger for an outbreak. An outbreak may be declared, however, at the direction of the Medical Health Officer.

**Q:** Do non-positive residents need to isolate in their rooms? What if they've been in contact with a resident who tests positive?

**A:** Not if they've been vaccinated, due to the relatively mild illness that Omicron currently presents. We recognize the importance of activities, non-essential services and socialization, and want to minimize disruption for residents. Unvaccinated resident contacts should be isolated and supported with contact and droplet precautions for five days following exposure to a case.

**Q:** What about residents who have been diagnosed with COVID-19? Do they need to isolate?

**A:** Yes. The individual should be isolated and supported with contact and droplet precautions for five days following the symptom onset date (whether vaccinated or unvaccinated).

**Q:** If we have cases but an outbreak hasn't been declared, can we continue to admit new residents?

**A:** Yes, admissions, re-admissions, or transfers to the facility can continue. Group activities such as meals in common areas, and recreational opportunities can continue. However, residents should not be transferred into a room occupied by a COVID positive resident within the infectious period. If there's no room available without COVID positive residents, then admissions need to be suspended.

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**Q:** What is the guidance around visitation if we have cases but not an outbreak?

**A:** Visits can continue, including for residents diagnosed with COVID-19.

**Q:** Some of our staff have tested positive. Can they come into work?

**A:** No, they should self-isolate at home and not come to work for five days following the symptom onset date. Vaccinated contacts of the case should not be isolated don't need to isolate and can come into work. Any unvaccinated contacts should self-isolate at home and not attend work in-person for five days following exposure to a case.

**Q:** If we have residents who are partially vaccinated, or still want a booster, can VCH help to provide this?

**A:** Yes, it's important to encourage vaccination to residents and staff who have not received three doses of a vaccine for COVID-19. If you need doses for residents, please contact [LTEEOC@vch.ca](mailto:LTEEOC@vch.ca), and we will help provide you with doses, or organize on-site vaccination for those residents.

If you have staff wishing to get a booster, direct them to <https://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/> and have these items ready:

- PHN (Personal Health Number, found on the back of your Driver's License or CareCard)
- Date of birth
- Date of a previous COVID-19 vaccine (either Dose 1 or Dose 2)
- Access Code: Y6383E! (to identify as a health care worker)