

In the community Long-term Care Facilities and Nursing Homes

COVID-19 Guidance

Older adults, especially those with existing medical conditions (like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease), are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. Any facility caring for individuals that may be at a higher risk for serious illness should take actions to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

There have been instances of COVID-19 community spread in the United States. The general strategies CDC recommends to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities and nursing homes are the same strategies these facilities use every day to detect and prevent the spread of other respiratory viruses like influenza.

Prevent the spread

- Implement social distancing measures (staying 6 feet away from others).
- Reduce large gatherings (e.g., group social events).
- Alter schedules to reduce mixing (e.g., stagger meal, activity, arrival/departure times).
- Limit programs with external staff.
- Consider having residents stay in facility to limit exposure to the general community.
- Limit visitors.
- Screen attendees, staff and visitors for temperature and respiratory symptoms.
- Consider short-term closures as needed for cleaning or contact tracing.
- Encourage residents to remain in their room.
- Remind residents who leave their rooms to wear a facemask, perform hand hygiene frequently, limit their movement throughout the facility and perform social distancing (stay at least 6 feet away from others).

Provide supplies for infection prevention and control

- Hand hygiene supplies should be stocked and available in every resident room and other resident care and common areas. Use at least 60% alcohol based handsanitizer.
- Soap and paper towels should be stocked at each sink for handwashing.

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COVID-19 is an immediately notifiable disease in the state of Georgia. All suspected (referred for testing) or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are required to be reported to the Health Department.

During business hours call 770-339-4260. Press 0. Ask to speak to the Epi on Call.
After hours call 404-323-1910. Available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

The symptoms of COVID-19 include:

Fever



Cough



Shortness of Breath



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- Tissues and facemasks should be easily available for coughing people.
- Make sure EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectants are available to allow for frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces and shared resident care equipment.
- Designate staff to steward those supplies and encourage appropriate use.
- Make necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) available in areas where resident care is provided.

Facilities should have supplies of:

facemasks

respirators (if available and the facility has a respiratory protection program with trained medically cleared and fit-tested HCP)

gowns

gloves

eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles)

Educate healthcare personnel

- Let staff know that they should stay home when sick.
- Adhere to infection prevention and control measures.
- Educate facility-based and consultant personnel (e.g., wound care, podiatry, barber) and volunteers on best practices.
- Consider implementing universal use of facemasks for healthcare professionals, or HCP, while in the facility.
- Consider having HCP wear all recommended PPE (gown, gloves, eye protection, N95 respirator or, if not available, a facemask) for the care of all residents, regardless of presence of symptoms.

Evaluate HCP for symptoms of respiratory illness

- Ask HCP, including consultant personnel, to regularly monitor themselves for fever and symptoms of respiratory infection.
- Screen all HCP at the beginning of their shift for fever and respiratory symptoms. Actively take their temperature and document absence of shortness of breath, new or change in cough, and sore throat. If they are ill, have them put on a facemask and leave the workplace.
- HCP who work in multiple locations may pose higher risk and should be asked about exposure to facilities with recognized COVID-19 cases.

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**For more information visit
www.gnrhealth.com/covid-19-info**

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Manage HCP with symptoms

- Keep ill staff and care providers home when they are ill.
- Implement sick leave policies that are non-punitive, flexible and consistent with public health policies that allow ill HCP to stay home.
- If HCP develop fever or symptoms of respiratory infection while at work, they should immediately put on a facemask, inform their supervisor and leave the workplace.
- Consult occupational health on decisions about further evaluation and return to work.
- Restrict nonessential healthcare personnel (including consultant personnel) and volunteers for entering the building.
- Develop or review existing plans to mitigate staffing shortages.

Evaluate residents for symptoms of respiratory illness

- Ask residents to report if they feel feverish or have symptoms of respiratory infection.
- Actively monitor all residents daily for fever and respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath, new or change in cough, and sore throat). If positive for fever or symptoms, implement recommended IPC practices.

Manage residents with symptoms

- Notify the health department about residents with severe respiratory infection, or a cluster (e.g., >3 residents or HCP with new-onset respiratory symptoms over 72 hours) of residents or HCP with symptoms of respiratory infections.
- In general, when caring for residents with undiagnosed respiratory infection use standard, contact and droplet precautions with eye protection unless the suspected diagnosis requires airborne precautions (e.g., tuberculosis).
- Implement protocols for cohorting ill residents with dedicated HCP.
- Restrict all visitation the facility except in certain compassionate care situations, such as end of life, and send letters or emails to families advising them of this policy.
Decisions about visitation during an end of life situation should be made on a case by case basis.
- Facilitate the use of alternative methods for visitation, like video conferencing.
- Post signs at the entrances to the facility advising that no visitors may enter the facility.

Educate residents, residents' families and visitors

- Provide information about COVID-19.
- Let individuals know what the facility is doing to protect them and their loved ones (eg. visitor restrictions, disinfecting, etc.).
- Describe the actions residents and families should take to protect themselves and others while in the facility.

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Review CDC's guidance for businesses and employers.

Review CDC guidance to identify strategies the childcare can use, given its role as an employer at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

Review the CDC's guidance for long-term care facilities and nursing homes.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>

The following websites offer reliable information for COVID-19:

Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Georgia Department of Public Health

<https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus>

Gwinnett, Newton and Rockdale County Health Departments

<https://gnrhealth.com/covid-19-info>



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