

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.

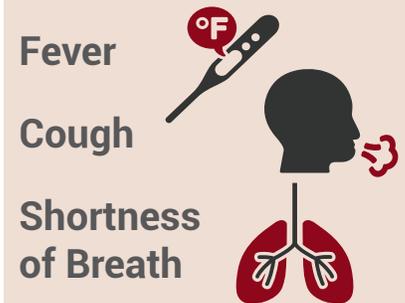
COVID-19 is being increasingly reported in communities across the United States. It is likely that SARS-CoV-2 will be identified in more communities, including areas where cases have not yet been reported. As such, nursing homes should assume it could already be in their community.

Prevent the spread

Long-term care facilities and nursing homes should **immediately implement the following policies to limit the impact of COVID-19 on their facilities:**

- **Restrict all visitation** except for certain compassionate care situations, such as end of life situations.
- **Restrict all volunteers and non-essential healthcare personnel (HCP)**, including non-essential healthcare personnel (e.g., barbers).
- **Cancel all group activities and communal dining.**
- **Implement active screening of residents and HCP** for fever and respiratory symptoms.
- **Implement social distancing measures** (staying 6 feet away from others).
- **Instruct residents to remain in their room.**
- **Require 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).**

The symptoms of COVID-19 include:



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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.

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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 hand sanitizer.
- Soap and paper towels should be stocked at each sink for hand-washing.
- 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 when they are allowed to return to the facility.
- 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.

Actively screen HCP for symptoms of respiratory illness

- 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,

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

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- new or change in cough, and sore throat. If they are ill, have them put on a facemask, leave the workplace and instruct them to contact their healthcare provider for further instruction.
- HCP who work in multiple locations may pose higher risk and should be asked about exposure to facilities with recognized COVID-19 cases.

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.
- Instruct staff to contact their healthcare provider for further instruction.
- Restrict nonessential healthcare personnel (including consultant personnel) and volunteers from 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. Dedicate a team of healthcare staff to care for patients infected.
- Restrict all visitation within 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.

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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.

Review CDC guidance for businesses and employers.

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

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

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

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Georgia Department of Public Health

www.dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus

Gwinnett, Newton and Rockdale County Health Departments

www.gnrhealth.com/covid-19-info



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

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