

Family, Friends & Residents – Residents Leaving and Returning to Dearness Home

The government has allowed four types of absence from long term care Homes:

1. **Medical absences** are absences to seek medical and/or health care:
 - Outpatient medical visits and a single visit (less than or equal to 24 hours in duration) to the Emergency Department do not require testing or self-isolation upon return to Dearness Home
 - All other medical visits (e.g., admissions/transfers to other health care facilities, multi-night stays in the Emergency Department) require testing and isolation (if applicable) upon return
2. **Compassionate/palliative absences**, such as visiting a dying loved one.
 - Single day absences (less than or equal to 24 hours in duration) do not require testing or self-isolation upon return.
 - Overnight absences require testing and isolation (if applicable) upon return
3. **Short term (day) absences** are absences that are less than or equal to 24 hours in duration. Testing or self-isolation of residents is not required upon return. There are two types of short term (day) absences:
 - **Essential absences** include absences for reasons of groceries, pharmacies, and outdoor physical activity. All individuals, regardless of their immunization status, can participate in essential absences, unless the resident is in isolation and on Droplet and Contact Precautions or as directed by the local public health unit.
 - **Social absences** include absences for all reasons not listed under medical, compassionate/palliative, and/or essential absences that do not include an overnight stay.
4. **Temporary absences** include absences involving two or more days and one or more nights for non-medical reasons.

Limitations on Absences

- When a Stay-At-Home Order is in effect (as per O. Reg 265/21) Essential absences are permitted but Social and Temporary absences are not permitted.
- Temporary absences require permission from the Home (see below)
- When a resident on an outbreak Home area or in isolation wishes to leave the Home for a Medical or Compassionate/Palliative absence, the Home will consult with public health for further advice

Safety During Absences

Absences from Dearness Home can expose the resident to a greater risk of COVID-19 infection, which can cause life-changing impairment or death. It is important to keep in mind that some residents and staff are not vaccinated, and that immunization is never a perfect barrier to infection or to passing on infection.

With this individual and collective responsibility in mind, the resident and those with them should always put safety first and follow these crucial steps:

- **Wear Masks:** The resident will leave Dearness Home with a surgical mask that should cover their nose and mouth throughout the absence, if tolerated. Any other person who interacts with the resident should also wear a mask
- **Physically Distance:** Unless both the resident and the person they are interacting with are fully immunized (2 vaccine doses and 14 days since the second dose received) the resident should remain 2 meters distant (particularly important when masks are off when eating and drinking) and avoid enclosed spaces wherever possible
- **Manage Risks:** Crowds or other high-risk areas (such as malls and indoor restaurants) should be avoided
- **Practice Hand Hygiene:** The resident and those with them should wash their hands frequently (carry hand sanitizer)

Taking a Short Term Absence

- Permission from Dearness Home for a short term absence is not required
- The resident or their Essential Caregiver must sign out before leaving, and sign in on their return (use the “Dearness Sign Out/In Form” located in the binder on the wall next to the nursing station on the Home area)
- Activities outside of Dearness Home must not breach government COVID-19 restrictions
- Departure must be between the hours of 9am and 4:30pm on Saturday, Sunday and Holidays, or 9am to 8pm on weekdays.
- Return should be prior to the end of visiting hours or where this is not possible, by 9pm at the latest.

Taking a Temporary Absence

- The resident must be fully vaccinated
- The resident or POA/SDM must speak to the RPN on the Home area at least 48 hours before the proposed departure time, in order to allow time for consideration from management and for the packaging of medications for the absence
- The resident or their Essential Caregiver must sign out before leaving, and sign in on their return (use the “Dearness Sign Out/In Form” located in the binder on the wall next to the nursing station on the Home area)
- Activities outside of Dearness Home must not breach government COVID-19 restrictions
- Departure must be between the hours of 9am and 4:30pm on Saturday, Sunday and Holidays, or 9am to 8pm on weekdays.
- Return should be prior to the end of visiting hours or where this is not possible, by 9pm at the latest.
- When the resident returns to Dearness Home after being away for one or more nights, Dearness will reference their vaccination status and test and isolate the resident if required under Directive #3 from the government.

