



Macon County
Public Health

March 4, 2020

Partner in Health:

Long-term Care Facilities (LTCF) can take precautions now to help to protect your patients and staff from the spread of respiratory illnesses, which includes COVID-19. All North Carolinians can better prepare for COVID-19 by getting up-to-date information, <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina/covid-19>, directly from reliable sources like local health departments, NCDHHS, and the CDC.

The general strategies CDC recommends to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in LTCF are the same strategies these facilities use every day to detect and prevent the spread of other respiratory viruses like influenza. In addition to good hand hygiene tips and other common-sense precautions, long-term care facilities should:

- Review policies and procedures for infection prevention and mitigation, and make sure all employees follow these steps:
 - Assure strict adherence to infection prevention practices.
 - Prevent the introduction of respiratory illnesses into their facilities.
 - Continue to work closely with your local health department, <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/county-health-departments>, NCDHHS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and follow their guidance.

The CDC website has further information for facility preparation, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities.

Prevent the introduction of respiratory germs INTO your facility:

- Post signs at the entrance instructing visitors not to visit if they have symptoms of respiratory infection like the flu.
- Ensure sick leave policies allow employees to stay home if they have symptoms of respiratory infection like the flu.
- Assess residents' symptoms of respiratory infection upon admission to the facility and implement appropriate infection prevention practices for incoming symptomatic residents.

Prevent the spread of respiratory germs WITHIN your facility:

- Keep residents and employees informed.
 - Describe what actions the facility is taking to protect them, including answering their questions and explaining what they can do to protect themselves and their fellow residents and employees.
- Monitor residents and employees for fever or respiratory symptoms.

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- Restrict residents with fever or acute respiratory symptoms to their room. If they must leave the room for medically necessary procedures, have them wear a facemask (if tolerated).
- If employees are sick, do not let them report for work, or ask them to go home until released to work again.
- In general, for care of residents with undiagnosed respiratory infection use Standard, Contact, and Droplet Precautions with eye protection unless suspected diagnosis requires Airborne Precautions (e.g., tuberculosis).
- Healthcare personnel should monitor their local and state public health sources to understand COVID-19 activity in their community to help inform their evaluation of individuals with unknown respiratory illness. If there is transmission of COVID-19 in the community, in addition to implementing the precautions described above for residents with acute respiratory infection, facilities should also consult with public health authorities for additional guidance.
- Support hand and respiratory hygiene, as well as cough etiquette by residents, visitors, and employees.
 - Ensure employees clean their hands according to CDC guidelines, <https://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/providers/index.html>, including before and after contact with residents, after contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment, and after removing personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - Put alcohol-based hand sanitizer in every resident room (ideally both inside and outside of the room).
 - Make sure tissues are available and any sink is well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing.
- Identify dedicated employees to care for COVID-19 patients and provide infection control training.
 - Guidance on implementing recommended infection prevention practices is available in CDC's free online course — The Nursing Home Infection Preventionist Training, <https://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/training.html> — which includes resources checklists for facilities and employees to use.
- Provide the right supplies to ensure easy and correct use of PPE.
 - Post signs on the door or wall outside of the resident room that clearly describe the type of precautions needed and required PPE.
 - Make PPE, including masks, eye protection, gowns, and gloves, available immediately outside of the resident room.
 - Position a trash can near the exit inside any resident room to make it easy for employees to discard PPE.

Prevent the spread of respiratory germs BETWEEN facilities:

- Notify facilities prior to transferring a resident with an acute respiratory illness, including suspected or confirmed COVID-19, to a higher level of care.
- Report any possible COVID-19 illness in residents and employees to the local health department at 828-421-2495, including your state HAI/AR coordinator.

For More Information, or if you have questions, please contact Macon County Public Health at 828-349-2081.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Carmine Rocco,
Macon County Health Director

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