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ORCA
Member E-Bulletin

December 9, 2021

IMPORTANT

COVID-19: Omicron Variant & NEW Screening Requirements for Retirement Homes

Memo from the Assistant Deputy Minister

*****Sent on behalf of the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility*****

Earlier today, the Ontario government distributed a [memo](#) outlining increased provisions and guidance retirement homes **MUST** follow in light of the rising spread of COVID-19 and the new variant of concern, Omicron.

Further to the [memo](#) sent by the Deputy Minister on November 29, 2021, about the Omicron variant of concern, the Government of Canada [announced](#) on November 30, 2021, that Egypt, Nigeria and Malawi have been added to the list of countries – South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Namibia - with additional travel restrictions.

Anyone who has travelled to any of the 10 identified African countries listed above within the last 14 days, regardless of vaccination status, is strictly prohibited to enter a retirement home as they are required to be in quarantine. This requirement also applies to anyone residing in the same household of a person who is in quarantine because of recent travel to these countries. **This includes individuals intending to visit palliative residents as well as staff, essential caregivers, support workers, visitors, students, volunteers, and contractors.**

In addition, **individuals who have travelled to any country outside of Canada within the last 14 days, including the US, and who are not under federal quarantine will be required to undergo rapid antigen testing when entering a retirement home, regardless of vaccination status.** Rapid antigen testing results are valid for 48 hours.

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testing requirement by **December 13, 2021**; however, it is recommended that homes strive to implement these changes as soon as possible.

Reminder: All licensed retirement homes are pre-approved to access rapid antigen tests from the Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP). Any home that is not already accessing test kits through this program can proceed directly to ordering rapid antigen tests through the provincial website. For more information about PASP and antigen screening in the retirement homes sector, we encourage you to visit [ORCA's Provincial Antigen Screening Program website](#).

In addition, please note that **retirement home residents who travelled to any of the 10 identified African countries within the last 14 days will not need to undergo and pass the screening requirements upon return to the home.** These residents must be permitted entry, isolated on Droplet and Contact Precautions and tested for COVID-19 as per federal requirements. The Ontario Government is updating the COVID-19 Screening Tool for Long-term Care Homes and Retirements Homes to reflect these requirements **effective December 9, 2021**.

For full details, please view the original memo [here](#).

The Association will continue to update members as new information emerges and updated resources become available. If you have any related questions, please contact the [ORCA Team](#) directly.

Sincerely,

The ORCA Team

In the best interest of the seniors, members, and staff we serve, ORCA has adopted a work from home policy until further notice. Please see the [ORCA Staff Contact Information](#) document if you need to connect with a staff member. For all COVID-19 related questions, please continue to contact [Erin Whetstone](#) directly.

If you are receiving any media calls about COVID-19 and would like assistance, please send a note to media@orcaretirement.com or refer reporters directly to that email. The ORCA team is on call to support you and your staff during this unprecedented time.

<p>Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility</p> <p>College Park 777 Bay Street 6th Floor, Suite 601C Toronto, ON M7A 2J4</p>	<p>Ministère des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité</p> <p>College Park 777, rue Bay 6^e étage, Bureau 601C Toronto ON M7A 2J4</p>	<p>Ontario </p>
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December 9, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO: All Retirement Home Licensees

FROM: Jacqueline Cureton
Assistant Deputy Minister
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

SUBJECT: Update – Retirement Homes COVID-19 Guidance on Screening

As we approach the end of this calendar year, I would like to thank you for your continued dedication and efforts in keeping home operations running smoothly and for supporting and caring for residents and their loved ones.

In light of the rising community spread of COVID-19 and the [new variant of concern](#) (Omicron), this memo provides increased provisions and guidance for retirement homes over the holiday season.

While the great majority of retirement homes have extremely high COVID-19 vaccination rates amongst residents, continued adherence to IPAC measures is crucial to managing this challenge.

Across Ontario, there are areas that are experiencing rapid increases in cases and local public health units have implemented additional public health measures. Dr. Kieran Moore, the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, continues to actively monitor the situation and is working closely with the local public health units to prevent and control transmission of COVID-19.

The following recommendations should be adhered to unless different direction is provided by your local public health unit:

1. New COVID-19 Variant of Concern (Omicron) and Screening

Further to the memo sent out by Deputy Minister Carlene Alexander on November 29, 2021 about the Omicron variant of concern, the Government of Canada [announced](#) on November 30, 2021, that Egypt, Nigeria and Malawi have been added to the list of countries with additional travel restrictions.

All travellers who have been in any of the 10 identified African countries in the 14 days before travelling to Canada will be subject to enhanced testing, screening, and federal quarantine measures for 14 days after being in the identified country if they are Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or hold status under the Indian Act. In addition, the Government of Canada requires all fully vaccinated travellers arriving by air from departure points other than the 10 African countries and the United States (US), to have a PCR test on entry and quarantine until they have a negative test result. Unvaccinated travellers are required to quarantine for 14 days post-arrival in Canada and get tested on days 1 and 8.

As per the federal government's implementation of enhanced measures, anyone who has travelled to any of the 10 identified African countries within the last 14 days, regardless of vaccination status, is not permitted to enter a retirement home as they are not permitted to leave their place of quarantine. This requirement also applies to individuals in the same household of a person who is currently required to be in quarantine because of recent travel. This includes individuals intending to visit palliative residents as well as staff, essential caregivers, support workers, visitors, students, volunteers, and contractors.

Furthermore, based on advice from Dr. Kieran Moore and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, individuals who have travelled to any country outside of Canada within the last 14 days, including the US, and who are not under federal quarantine will be required to undergo rapid antigen testing when entering a retirement home, regardless of vaccination status. Rapid antigen testing results are valid for 48 hours. Retirement homes are expected to come into compliance with this new antigen testing requirement by December 13, 2021; however it is recommended that homes strive to implement these changes as soon as possible.

All licensed retirement homes are pre-approved to access rapid antigen tests from the Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP). Any home that is not already accessing test kits through this program can proceed directly to ordering rapid antigen tests through the [provincial website](#). More information about PASP and antigen screening in the retirement homes sector can be found at: <https://www.orcaretirement.com/news/coronavirus-update-resources/pasp/>.

In addition, please note that retirement home residents who travelled to any of the 10 identified African countries within the last 14 days will not need to undergo and pass the screening requirements upon return to the home. These residents must be permitted entry, isolated on [Droplet and Contact Precautions](#) and tested for COVID-19 as per federal requirements. The Ministry of Health is updating the [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Long-term Care Homes and Retirements Homes](#) to reflect these requirements **effective December 9, 2021**.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to improving the quality of care for seniors in Ontario.

As always, should you have questions you, please contact us at RHInquiries@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Jacqueline Cureton

Assistant Deputy Minister
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

c: Carlene Alexander, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health
Jay O'Neill, Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Retirement Home Regulatory Authority (RHRA)
Cathy Hecimovich, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Retirement Communities Association (ORCA)