

Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes: COVID-19 Guidelines for Communal Dining

The Chief Medical Officer of Health's COVID-19 Directive #3 for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes requires the implementation of risk reduction measures for the protection of our most vulnerable residents. Key risk reduction measures include physical distancing during communal dining. Homes must also continue to support good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene before and after meals.

Strategies for Immediate Implementation:

- Ensure all dining tables and resident chairs, including wheelchairs, are spaced a minimum **2 metres** apart. The **2-metre** minimum applies to back-to-back seating, as well as face-to-face seating.
- Any resident who is ill or in self-isolation must be served meals within their room.
- During **outbreak** all meals must be served and eaten within residents' rooms.
- Create a plan in advance in order to quickly change to tray service in the event of an outbreak.

Strategies for Consideration when Space is Limited:

- Stagger meal service to allow for multiple sittings per meal. Ensure all dining tables are cleaned and disinfected between each meal sitting.
- Open additional space for dining service.
- Designate some residents to receive meal service in their rooms on a rotating schedule.
- Create a seating plan if using a rotating dining schedule.

Plexiglass barriers can reasonably be considered if all the above options are exhausted and the barriers are designed such that:

- The appropriate size and shape of barriers are likely to block individuals' breathing zones with a good margin of safety.
- They are positioned so that individuals can't easily reach around.
- They are secured to the table to prevent any safety concerns.
- They are cleaned and disinfected after each sitting.
- Consideration is given to pairing residents at shared tables with roommates or close friends who may already be in close contact.

Reference:

[Physical Barriers for COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control in Commercial Settings](#)

Updated November 13, 2020