

February 12, 2021

This week we continued our frequency of testing with rapid antigen testing on Monday, PCR on Tuesday and rapid antigen again on Friday. We received the disheartening news of a resident testing positive on first floor. The positive test was confirmed on the PCR test from Tuesday, Monday's test was negative. COVID-19 has proven to be an unpredictable virus with often prolonged periods of incubation. It has been difficult to complete contact tracing with this most recent case. Staff and residents have continued to test negative, we believe exposure occurred at or around the last round of positive cases and incubation was prolonged. Long incubation has been common and challenges our resilience.

We will continue to test multiple times a week, we believe this is the most effective approach to identify new cases of COVID. Rapid response is the critical link to stopping the chain of infection. In addition to routine testing, individuals who received both doses of the Pfizer vaccine have reached their highest level of efficacy; approximately 95% effective in preventing COVID and reducing symptoms/ duration of illness for those who contract COVID.

Dr. Chan, State Epidemiologist, often describes our current situation as "a period of transition." We have all been anxiously waiting for CMS to lift restrictions on visitation and in other requirements. Evan Shulman, CMS Director for the Division of Nursing Home was recently quoted saying "For the current time, all existing recommendations and guidance for visitation need to be adhered to." Although a high percentage of residents and staff are vaccinated the vast majority of the public has yet to receive their first dose of the COVID vaccine. We can anticipate additional guidance and adjustments to CMS' requirements but as of now there are no changes. We understand the frustrating news these quotes present and we are hopeful CMS releases new guidance soon.

The Centers for Disease Control recently released a statement saying individuals who have tested positive for COVID in the last three months or are two weeks post their final dose of the COVID vaccine do not require quarantine. CMS has not adjusted their requirements and we are continuing to follow the same quarantine requirements until we hear otherwise from CMS. The CDC has also released updated information about properly wearing masks. Gators are mostly ineffective and masks which allow breath to exhaust from the sides are also ineffective. The CDC is encouraging a double mask approach which covers the vulnerable parts of the mask. The CDC created the following video for Youtube to illustrate how to improve a surgical mask: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izGxRyG-1Yw>.

A few wonderful tokens of appreciation were presented to us today. Girl Scouts Troop 10097 from Berlin made Valentine cards for residents and donated candy for staff. Students from Salve Regina Academy made Valentines for residents and Jeff Girard, Dietary Manager, made heart shaped cookies for our residents; his daughters also made Valentines cards for residents. We are grateful for all the beautiful acts of kindness.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns. Email is the most effective form of communication.

Thank you,

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