

May 21, 2021

Families, friends, residents and staff,

This week we were blessed with multiple days of beautiful weather and warm temperatures so many residents spent time enjoying the sun and fresh air. We also made a transition this week regarding how we manage our resident visits. Over the past year the Activity Department has absorbed responsibility of maintaining the monitoring, escorting and disinfecting requirements established by our state and federal oversight entities. Considering we were unable to have large group activities this practice worked until the most recent adjustments. To continue meeting the visiting requirements while also returning to large group activities as of this week we have instituted the following changes:

- Door monitor will screen visitors upon arrival.
- Handheld radios have been distributed to the door monitor and office personnel, managers will escort visitors to visiting location.
- Visitors are asked to remain in designated visiting area. Please inform staff if you would like to transition visit to the outdoors and you will be escorted outside.
- While outside, please do not leave the resident alone UNLESS you know the resident does not have a cognitive impairment.
- While visiting in a resident's room, please DO NOT leave the room without an escort unless it is an emergency.
- Please follow our masking and distancing requirements when applicable.

We have received many calls with questions about taking a resident for a drive, to have a family dinner and a variety of other outings. To ensure we maintain a safe community for all residents and staff we request families practice caution while participating in an off site visit. Our home office in Manchester has created a guide to provide consistent messaging and understanding of the most recent CMS and CDC, please see the attachment. We hope you will assist us in keeping our community and residents safe. Please share your plans with us, so we can offer guidance. Through open communication can avoid any surprises which effects resident activities and visitations.

Lastly, this week we did not conduct routine surveillance testing for unvaccinated employees. Once a month testing will be held on Tuesday, June 1.

Have a great weekend,

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RESIDENT TRIPS OUTSIDE FACILITY

These guidelines are based on current CDC and Federal requirements and are subject to change as the guidance is updated. As you know, the state guidance has been lifted, but nursing homes are required to follow CDC and CMS directives. We are slowly normalizing, but not as fast as the outside world. The rate of COVID-19 in nursing homes has decreased dramatically. We ask that you help to protect our residents and staff when you take your loved one for a car ride, whether that be to an appointment, your home to visit family, or to a restaurant.

- The safest trip is going for a car ride and not stopping anywhere, with all passengers in the car vaccinated at this point in the pandemic. Please have all passengers wear masks and the windows down if weather permits, as a car is considered a small enclosed space.
- If you stop for an ice cream, we ask that you sit outside on a bench or a picnic table, while you have your masks off enjoying your ice cream. It is always safest to be outside when masks are removed. Please wear masks when you are not actively enjoying your ice cream.
- Going to a restaurant is not advisable at this time, but if you do dine out, please consider going at times before or after the noon or dinner rush. Many restaurants are no longer enforcing the wearing of masks and the fewer people you encounter, the safer it will be for everyone. Maybe consider a late lunch at 2 pm or an early dinner at 4 or 4:30. If eating outside is an option, this would be preferable over dining indoors. If your server approaches without a mask, please ask him or her to put one on. If everyone in your party is fully vaccinated, you may bring take-out food from a restaurant to the facility and enjoy your meal while all together.
- Home Visits with Family - This gets a little tricky and will vary depending on who is present during the visit. If you are indoors and everyone in the group is vaccinated, masks may be removed for short periods of time, with social distancing. This applies even in a small group. When visiting indoors, open some windows for ventilation, weather permitting. If you are outdoors and everyone in your small group is vaccinated, you may consider taking off your masks for short periods, while maintaining social distancing of 6 feet. If unvaccinated visitors are present, everyone should keep their masks on for the entire visit.
- A visit home with unvaccinated family requires more caution, however we understand there may be times when unvaccinated individuals are present, such as young children. If you are just going for a car ride with no stops, please keep some windows open and have everyone keep their mask on at all times and social distance as much as possible while in the vehicle. Remember even fully vaccinated people can get COVID-19 and can spread it. Families have been separated for more than a year and of course we understand that nothing is going to stop a grandparent from hugging their grandchild. It is important for families to begin to establish such connections again. We do ask that this physical contact be limited and when there is physical touch, both people should wear a mask, unless the child is under 2 years old and unable to wear a mask.
- A visit home to go to a party with a large group of people, especially if there will be both vaccinated and unvaccinated guests, is not recommended at this time. If there is an upcoming event, such as a wedding, graduation or some other type of special occasion that would really be important to your loved one, please discuss this in advance along with the type of event, number of guests, etc., with the Director of Nursing, the Assistant Director of Nursing or the Administrator. We want your loved one to enjoy such an important family occasion, and we can work together to help ensure the event is attended as safely as possible. We are committed to keeping all the residents in our care safe, so depending on the circumstances, or if we feel there has been a potential exposure, we may need to have your loved one quarantine after returning to the facility for a period of time. It is helpful to us to know this in advance so we can plan a smooth transition.

Small group visits with everyone vaccinated is always safest. Outside is best – Let's take advantage of the nicer weather now.

Generally, exposing residents to unvaccinated people in the community, who may not mask, is NOT recommended. We hope you will assist us in keeping our community and residents safe. Please share your plans with us, so we can offer guidance. Keeping communication open will avoid any surprises.

These lifts in restrictions have been a long time coming and we are very happy our residents and families are able to socialize and be together again. Our goal is to keep everyone safe so we will be able to maintain and continue loosening restrictions as guided by the CDC and CMS. Thank you for your cooperation. Please contact us with any questions.