

Frequently asked questions: Little Mountain Place family update

January 25, 2021

How did COVID-19 enter Little Mountain Place?

COVID-19 has been very prevalent in our province during the time of this outbreak, and those who become infected in the community include people working in long-term care homes. The large majority of long-term care outbreaks are started when a person infected with COVID-19 works in a care home while infectious, but are unaware of their infection.

What steps have you taken to address the outbreak at Little Mountain Place?

We have strict infection control protections that are implemented when a COVID-19 outbreak is declared in a long-term care facility.

A VCH Medical Health Officer leads the outbreak response closely through daily on-site meetings with facility staff and several VCH leaders to ensure appropriate Infection Prevention and Control precautions are in place for the safety of residents and health care providers.

Outbreak measures include restricting resident exposure outside of their rooms, including during mealtimes, and cancelling group activities and non-essential services, in addition to enhanced cleaning, and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by staff.

To help reduce further spread, we also closely monitor and test all residents and staff if they develop symptoms. In addition, at Little Mountain Place, we have conducted proactive and low-barrier COVID-19 testing of both residents and staff who may have been exposed to the virus, even if they had no symptoms.

How long will this go on? When can I see my parent?

To ensure the safety of all residents and staff in the home, and follow provincial requirements, outbreaks are declared over 28 days after the last infection was discovered. Until this time, outbreak precautions, including suspended in-person visitation will remain in place. We will keep you informed as to when the restrictions will be lifted. The earliest time that the outbreak at Little Mountain Place will be declared over is in early February 2021.

In the meantime, virtual visitation is still available for all loved ones. If you would like to arrange a virtual visit, please contact us.

What is the current status of the outbreak at Little Mountain Place?

At this time, a total of 99 residents and 72 staff have tested positive for COVID-19. There are no residents considered to be actively infectious with COVID-19 at this time. We are deeply saddened to say that 41 residents have passed away. We continue to mourn these residents and our hearts go out to every individual who has been affected by COVID-19.

Have all staff and residents of Little Mountain Place received vaccination?

All eligible Little Mountain Place residents have received vaccination. In addition, most eligible staff have also received vaccination. Vaccination is available for any remaining eligible staff.

Where did the extra staff come from?

During outbreaks, VCH works to ensure that the care home has enough staff to provide care to the residents. This is achieved a number of ways, such as hiring new staff, giving extra hours to part-time

and casual staff, and redeploying existing staff from within VCH who volunteer to work in long-term care facilities during outbreaks. VCH has provided over 60 staff to work at Little Mountain Place during the outbreak.

The single site order that is currently in place limits staff to working at a single long-term care, assisted living or provincial mental health site in order to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of vulnerable residents and clients.

What qualifies for an essential visit?

Essential visits include:

- Visits for compassionate care, including critical illness, palliative care, hospice care, end of life, and Medical Assistance in Dying;
- Visits paramount to the resident's physical care and mental well-being (e.g., assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care or communication, assistance by designated representatives for persons with disabilities); and
- Visits for supported decision-making.

Essential visits may also include existing registered volunteers providing the services described above and visits required to move belongings in/out of a resident's room.

Essential visits shall be limited to one visitor per resident within the facility at a time (except in the case of palliative/end of life care).

An essential visit is not a social visit. Essential visits are permitted in a care home/residence that has an active COVID-19 outbreak, under guidance and direction from the local MHO.

Residents may not recognize their loved ones when they are wearing masks. Are there any options for taking masks off during visits?

The safety of our residents and staff are our priority. A mask provides an important control measure when it comes to the transmission of COVID-19, and at this time, all visitors must wear masks.

You may consider adding ways to remind your love ones about who you are, such as bringing photos, using songs or reminding them of memories you have shared together.

Are you back to baseline staffing levels plus additional outbreak staffing?

We have had many of our staff recover from illness and be cleared to return to work, allowing us to release some of our redeployed VCH staff.

We currently have the staffing levels necessary to manage the outbreak at Little Mountain Place and provide our residents with the care that they need.

Who receives communications from the site?

Typically, Little Mountain Place will be in communication with the substitute decision maker (SDM) for each resident. That person should be responsible for relaying any information on the health status of your loved one to the family or friends that need to know. A long-term care home may only communicate with those who have been designated for each resident, so extended family members are encouraged to connect with the SDM who is in regular contact with Little Mountain Place.

Why are some outbreaks worse than others?

While this issue is common to all long-term care outbreaks, in the case of Little Mountain Place, this challenge has been compounded by a high rate of community transmission. The high COVID-19 incidence in the community impacts on people working in long-term care, and in November and December, it is believed that this resulted in multiple new introductions of COVID-19 into the care home. With the potential for multiple branching chains of transmission, the ongoing introduction of newly infected cases would increase the challenge of infection control.

As well, during a major outbreak, when numerous staff become infected and need to be isolated at home, this diminishes the ability of the site to implement infection control measures. The more staff that are off sick, the more work is put on each of the remaining staff. Higher workloads and longer hours result in a higher risk of inadvertent exposure, which may in turn cause further staff to need time off. This has been a major target of intervention since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with break spaces spatially distanced and the mandatory use of PPE by staff in all areas.

The convergence of these risk factors and the resulting health impacts have been, tragically, more severe than other outbreaks in Vancouver Coastal Health.

When are the residents who have been vaccinated getting their second dose of the vaccine?

As recommended by Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, VCH is planning to provide the second dose of COVID-19 vaccination approximately 35 days after the first dose.

Why is VCH or Little Mountain Place not providing comments to the media about the outbreak?

VCH and Little Mountain Place are committed to keeping families and loved ones informed about the status of the outbreak. We have spoken directly with residents, family and staff members, both over the phone and on site. While sharing information about the outbreak overall, as well as specific information about family members, we cannot provide personal health information of a resident to anyone other than pre-designated family and other substitute decision makers.

Vancouver Coastal Health has also provided extensive responses to media inquiries. At all times, the priority of both teams is to manage the outbreak, and provide the best possible care to the residents that call Little Mountain Place their home.