

COVID-19 Protocols for Resident Absences

The protocols below reflect changes effective June 27, 2022, that must be followed by all residents who leave for absences, as applicable.

There are four types of absences:

1. **Medical absences** - absences to seek medical and/or health care.
 2. **Compassionate/palliative absences** - absences that include, but are not limited to, absences for the purposes of visiting a dying loved one.
 3. **Short term (day) absences** are split into:
 - I. **Essential outings** – absences for reasons of groceries, pharmacies, and outdoor physical activity; and
 - II. **Social outings** - absences other than for medical, compassionate/palliative, or essential outings.
 4. **Temporary (overnight) absences** refer to absences for two or more days and one or more nights away from the home for non-medical purposes.
- For all types of absences, residents will be provided with a medical mask and reminded to practice public health measures, such as physical distancing (2 metres separation) and hand hygiene, while they are away from the community. Additionally, all residents on an absence, regardless of the type or duration of the absence, must be actively screened upon their return to the community.
 - Absences for medical or compassionate/palliative reasons are the only absences permitted when the resident is in isolation on Droplet and Contact Precautions (due to symptoms, exposure, and/or diagnosis of COVID-19) or when the community is in outbreak. The community should consult their local PHU for their advice.
 - Residents are permitted to go on Essential Outings, including walks either on or off the premises, at all times except when that resident is isolating and on Droplet and Contact Precautions, or as directed by the local PHU.
 - Residents may not be permitted to start Short Term (Day) Absences and Temporary (Overnight) Absences if the resident is isolating on additional precautions, or when advised by public health.
 - Any resident who has been in close contact with an individual who is positive for COVID-19 or symptomatic following a short-term or temporary absence should be managed as a close contact as per the MOH’s COVID-19 Guidance: LTCH/RH for PHUs.
 - Based on absence type, the following requirements apply:

	Requirements
Short term (day) absence Essential outing and Social outing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities must allow short term absences regardless of reason. Public health units may direct restrictions on absences for residents in isolation and on Droplet and Contact Precautions. • Residents must follow public health measures during the absence. • Active screening is required on return. • Testing is not required for residents upon return from a short term (day) absence unless they have been in close contact to a known COVID-19 case.
Temporary (overnight) absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities must allow overnight absences regardless of reason. Public health units may direct restrictions on absences for residents in isolation and on Droplet and Contact Precautions. • Residents must follow public health measures during the absence.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active screening is required on return.• All residents, regardless of vaccination status, are required to perform a molecular test on day 5 of return. No isolation is required unless the resident receives a positive test result or is symptomatic. If a timely PCR test is not available, 2 RATs 24 hours apart may be used as an alternative (i.e., on day 5 and day 6 of return).• Communities must not deny entry to residents into their suite while awaiting testing results and must not impose isolation of residents.
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References:

- Ministry of Health [Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#) (June 2, 2022)
- Ministry of Health [COVID-19 Guidance: LTC & Retirement Homes for Public Health Units](#) (June 27, 2022)
- [Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility COVID-19 Guidance Document for Retirement Homes in Ontario](#) (June 24, 2022)