



Reopening to Visitors:

What you Should Know

Table of Contents

What You'll Learn

2

Guidance for Reopening

3-4

Infection Control Protocols for Easing Restrictions

5

What You'll Learn

The long-term care industry has been at the epicenter of COVID-19, leading the country's fatalities from the virus. To curb the spread, facilities were forced to implement lockdowns. As states start to allow guests back into skilled nursing facilities, the relaxed rules are a welcome relief to many, especially those suffering negative mental health effects from the social isolation. But protocols are still required to keep patients healthy. From visitor guidelines to preventing a potential outbreak, standards are key to successfully navigating the new normal.

Find out best practices for operating post-pandemic.

2.1 MILLION Americans reside in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

“ Loneliness and depression, even during non-COVID-19 times, are real issues for seniors.



Guidance for Reopening

States and counties throughout the country are progressing through stages of reopening various businesses. But skilled nursing facilities are not among the first phase in most. That's because the decision is a complicated one that must be based on a number of factors.

Due to the dangerously high number of fatalities from COVID-19 among those age 65 and older, CMS issued recommendations for state and local officials in May to help inform their decisions about relaxing restrictions and the considerations for allowing visitation in each phase. Specifically, CMS recommends not opening facilities to visitors (except for compassionate care situations) **until phase three when:**

- there have been no new, nursing home onset COVID-19 cases in the nursing home for 28 days (through phases one and two)
- the nursing home is not experiencing staff shortages
- the nursing home has adequate supplies of personal protective equipment and essential cleaning and disinfection supplies to care for patients
- the nursing home has adequate access to testing for COVID-19
- Referral hospital(s) have bed capacity on wards and intensive care units

Even when visitation in facilities is allowed, that does not necessarily mean relaxing all the rules. Facilities should follow federal, state and local guidelines designed to protect the safety of this at-risk population as they reopen. While these may vary, common recommendations as restrictions lift **include:**

- Having only one main entry point for guests
- Scheduling visits in advance and only during designated hours
- Limiting the number of visitors in the facility at any one time
- Performing visitor screening protocols such as temperature checks and questionnaires
- Having designated visitor areas with hard surfaces
- Allowing for adequate social distancing
- Thoroughly cleaning high-touch common areas
- Requiring proper hand hygiene and face coverings of all guests to the property



Infection Control Protocols for Easing Restrictions

To open responsibly, one of the most important considerations for facilities are its infection control procedures. More stringent protocols are needed to help prevent an outbreak of COVID-19. Appropriate measures include:

- **Handwashing:** Be sure to remind patients and staff about proper handwashing. Per the CDC, the steps are:
 - Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Wash hands often, but especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60 percent to 95 percent alcohol.
 - If possible, provide hand sanitizer around the facility and to patients who can safely use it.
- **Cough Etiquette:** Encourage patients and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then dispose of it in a trash can, preferably one with a touch-less lid opener.
- **Adequate Supplies:** Always have tissues, touch-less trash cans, hand sanitizer, and soap available in your facility.
- **Face Contact:** Suggest to those in your facility that they avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.
- **Social Distancing:** Remind patients to keep at least six feet between themselves and others.
- **Cleaning:** Review current schedules for disinfection and increase as necessary. Properly use cleaning products that meet the criteria for use against the virus on major touch-points like doorknobs, handrails, and elevator buttons.

In addition to prevention, facilities also need management protocols to address an outbreak. Specifically, they should be prepared to act as soon as there is an issue, which many anticipate may happen in the fall coinciding with the onset of flu season and a potentially second wave of COVID-19. Control steps may include isolating infected patients, quarantining close contacts, and widespread testing.



PharMerica

PharMerica[®]

PharMerica is redefining pharmacy management service for skilled nursing facilities, long term care facilities, hospitals and other care settings.

With a singular focus on tailored customer service, we collaborate with our clients to develop products and services that help them provide quality care, control costs, and remain compliant with ever-changing regulations.

Contact us at PharMerica@pharmerica.com
or 855-637-1755 to learn more.