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# Important Reminder: Safer Visits in Assisted Living Facilities

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### Important Reminder: Safer Visits in Assisted Living Facilities

The vulnerable nature of people who live in assisted living facilities, combined with the risks of congregate living during a pandemic, has limited the ability for safe visits to occur in Assisted Living facilities. While limiting visitation has been the safest approach to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it has created other unintended consequences for residents that may seriously threaten their health and emotional well-being.

The purpose of the [Safer Visits in Assisted Living Facilities guidance](#) is to provide a balance between maintaining safety and supporting residents, family members, and staff. If an Assisted Living facility determines they can effectively mitigate the risks associated with relaxed visitation, please refer to these [recommendations for safer visits](#).

As the pandemic is affecting communities in different ways, facilities should regularly monitor the local disease activity as a consideration when implementing visitation practices, but this should not be the sole factor in determining whether visits can occur. Resources for monitoring local disease activity levels include:

- [DHS COVID-19: Activity Level by Region and County](#)
- [Local Public Health](#)

If there is not an outbreak in the facility, or if the outbreak is limited to a single unit, floor, or wing, the facility may allow visitation to a non-affected unit, or within a wing or floor where an outbreak was identified if the outbreak is contained and interventions are in place for continued containment. The [guidance](#) includes preventive measures to reduce the likelihood of the introduction of COVID-19 into the facility, while mitigating the unintentional consequences of social isolation from family and other loved ones.

Now that clients and staff are being vaccinated, some are asking if masks are still required and if communal dining and normal visitation within the assisted living facility can resume. The Department of Health Services COVID Vaccine website COVID-19: [Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions](#) states the following:

*Yes, you still need to practice normal pandemic behavior after you have gotten two doses of the vaccine. Here is why:*

- *In the short run, it takes several weeks after getting the vaccine before it builds-up a protective immune response in your body. Until then, you are still vulnerable to get sick from the COVID-19 virus.*
- *The vaccine is very good at keeping the vaccinated person healthy and able to take care of their friends, family and community.*
- *For those who are vaccinated and do not get sick, we don't know yet if some virus particles can survive and reproduce in your body that you might spread to others when you breathe, cough, or sneeze.*
- *Because the virus is still spreading, it is especially important to wear a mask and continue physical distancing to protect yourself and your family.*

We need to continue using **all the tools** available to help stop this pandemic. To protect yourself and others, follow these recommendations:

Wear a mask over your nose and mouth

- Social Distancing - stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Avoid crowds
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces
- Wash your hands often

During the next Assisted Living Forum the [Safer Visits in Assisted Living Facilities guidance](#) will be reviewed and best practices shared to ensure Assisted Living residents remain connected to their loved ones during the pandemic. For more information on the Assisted Living Forum, please visit [Assisted Living Forum | Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#).

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