



November 24, 2020

Dear Residents, Families & Friends,

Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the holiday season are just around the corner, and we understand the importance of traditions and gatherings with family and friends. However, this year the holidays may look and feel different for everyone. As the pandemic lingers and we continue to see a surge in cases in our area, it leaves one questioning—Should we be gathering at all? And if so, how can I make it safe, and what precautions can I put in place?

As you know, we've been taking the safety and security of your loved one very seriously. Our residents are most vulnerable to COVID-19, and we have been making extraordinary efforts to keep them safe. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services does not recommend that seniors leave their care facilities for the holidays due to the increased risk it poses for nursing home and adult care residents. The decision on whether you take your loved one out for the holidays is truly a personal decision. However, should you decide that you will be taking your family member out, please understand the risks of doing so, along with the measures that you are required to take to minimize those risks. Consider the number of people that will be gathering. You will want to do some screening of your own, ensuring that everyone you will be gathering with is free of any symptoms, have not had recent exposure, and are not in a quarantine period.

For any resident that does go out you must adhere to the following guidelines recommended by the CDC on social distancing and NYS guidelines, including:

- Wearing a mask that properly covers your nose and mouth
- Limiting close contact with others (maintaining physical distancing of six feet or more) maintaining a six-foot distance. Since wearing a mask is not possible while eating, ensuring there is at least a six-foot distance will be even more important.
- Avoiding large gatherings and keeping gatherings as small as possible, as well as using technology to engage with others remotely. It is also important to note that in the state of NY, the Governor has ordered that all private gatherings should be limited to 10 or fewer people.
- Performing frequent hand hygiene.
- Avoiding sharing of communal food or drinks
- Further precautions one may consider is testing for COVID-19 within 72 hours prior to gathering and speaking with your health care practitioner about it.

We want to prepare you for the return process should any resident go out.

In NY state, the Governor has ordered that upon return, residents who leave our facility must:

- **Test negative immediately (within 24 hours) before returning to our facility.**
- Quarantine or minimize contact to the extent safely possible prior to their return to the facility.
- Be quarantined on transmission-based precautions upon return to the facility for 14 days.
- Be tested at least three times during the 14-day quarantine period at the facility, including on the first day (upon return) and the last day that a resident must be quarantined.

Lastly, in NY state, the Governor has ordered that upon return, our facility must require the leaving resident and a family or friend to attest in writing that they:

- Are aware of the risks involved with taking the resident out of the facility;
- Will follow masking, social distancing, and hand hygiene practices pursuant to CDC and DOH directives;
- Will notify the facility if the resident becomes ill within one week of leaving the facility;
- Will notify the facility if anyone with whom the resident socialized tests positive for COVID-19 or influenza or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 and influenza within 14 days of the resident's return to the facility;
- Will communicate with the facility about a return date for the resident to the facility in accordance with the facility's policy; and
- Will quarantine or minimize contact (or assist the resident to do so) to the extent safely possible prior to return to a nursing home.

We understand that this may not be convenient, but please understand that we must comply with NYS orders as we make every effort to protect everyone—residents and staff.

The following are some very helpful links that may guide you in your planning for the holidays.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/thanksgiving.html>

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid-facility-holiday-recommendations.pdf>

Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation, and we hope that you all stay safe and healthy this holiday season.

Martha A. Wright

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