

COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES

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Conversations about our wishes in the face of an incurable illness such as COVID-19 are very challenging. But being prepared for future events can also provide peace-of-mind to individuals and families amidst the uncertainty of these unsettling times. We wanted to share with you some information to help you explore, share and document your goals of care in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What care can be provided for COVID-19?

At this time there is no curative treatment for COVID-19, but we can offer supportive care. For those that develop severe symptoms, we can provide oxygen, medications, and intravenous or subcutaneous fluids. This is why in long-term care homes across Toronto; we are expanding access to increased physician and nursing support so that testing and these treatments and care can be delivered without the need to go to hospital. It is our hope that with increased health care supports resources that you or your family member can be cared for in your long-term care home.

What if these treatments don't work and I get sicker?

If you or your loved one continues to have worsening symptoms and requires more oxygen than can be delivered via nasal prongs, the next treatment is intubation and being placed on a ventilator in an intensive care unit in the hospital.

Emerging information on COVID-19 suggests that older frail adults and those with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, COPD, high blood pressure, cancer or dementia are at increased risk of serious illness and death. While the average death rate from COVID-19 is between 2% and 4%, the death rate among older patients (age 80 or older) is much higher and estimated at 15%.¹. Once a person with COVID-19

¹ JAMA Feb 2020

requires intubation and is placed on a ventilator (life support), the mortality is over 80% and in a recent study as high as 97%.²

Intensive care and artificial life support is a grueling experience that causes suffering and results in serious, long-term medical problems and significantly reduced levels of independence. For older adults, this means that there is little chance of surviving if life support is required, and if one does survive, long-term complications are likely.

Discussing and Documenting your Goals of Care

Every medical intervention has pros and cons for people of all ages. These should be considered in light of what living well means to you. No matter where you are cared for, your healthcare team will work collaboratively to ensure that we do everything we can to meet your goals of care. Once you have had the opportunity to explore your wishes with your family, please ensure that your family member, family physician or nursing team have your wishes clearly documented to guide your healthcare team.

To view a video that covers this information, click on the link below:

<https://youtu.be/i16ZDM3ZnZA>

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