



LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

Long-term care (LTC) facilities, including nursing homes and assisted living facilities, are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 outbreaks due to the concentration of vulnerable older adults — many with some form of cognitive impairment — and the essential need for health care and support workers to commute to and from these facilities. The no-visitor policies currently in place in nursing homes have also been adopted by many assisted living communities and other LTC facilities, so caregivers are unable to provide direct care or emotional support. To help with workforce shortages, some states have relaxed training and licensing requirements for temporary or provisional staff. States also are creating strike or bridge teams for LTC settings with rising or significant outbreaks of COVID-19; members of these teams may have limited knowledge of dementia and person-centered care.

KNOW THE FACTS

- » 48% of people in nursing homes have Alzheimer's or other dementias.
- » Direct-care workers have difficult jobs, and many do not receive the training necessary to provide quality dementia care or have access to personal protective equipment (PPE).
- » In the severe stage of dementia, people often become bed-bound and need round-the-clock care.
- » Some unpaid caregivers continue to help with bathing, dressing, and other activities of daily living for LTC residents living with dementia.
- » Isolation and limited support/cueing may lead to reduction in eating or drinking. This can create safety concerns, as the affected individual may not recognize food or distinguish between edible and inedible items on a food tray.

COVID-19 CHALLENGES

- » Residents with dementia may have difficulty adhering to social distancing guidelines from other residents. Also, many need hands-on or close-proximity care from staff.
- » Restricted access to LTC facilities may prevent unpaid caregivers, including family and friends, from assisting with direct care and emotional support for persons with dementia. A secondary impact may be increased strain on LTC care providers.
- » Changes in staffing and schedules due to workforce shortages may disrupt the delivery of person-centered care to residents living with dementia. As a result, they may experience more confusion and manifest negative behaviors.
- » Provisional staff and members of strike/bridge teams may have no or little training about dementia and person-centered care.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

- » Ensure LTC facilities understand and adhere to CDC and CMS COVID-19 guidance.
- » Improve access to adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfectant, and sanitation supplies for LTC settings.
- » Promote use of the Alzheimer's Association's guidance for LTC professionals, including provisional staff hired due to workforce shortages or members of strike/bridge teams aiding with infection control.
- » Facilitate planning between hospital systems and LTC facilities for evaluation and transfer of potential COVID-19 cases among the LTC population. Include steps for contacting caregivers in these plans.
- » Ensure COVID-19 training for LTC professionals educates them how to cue hand-washing and other hygienic practices, minimize risk for themselves and residents, and monitor co-occurring conditions for persons living with dementia.
- » Ensure LTC facilities review and update their emergency plans for potential natural or other disasters during the COVID-19 pandemic, including how to address the special needs of people with dementia.
- » Ensure LTC facilities maintain communication with appropriate family or other key support individuals, even if done by phone or virtually, during this time of enforced separation.

RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Guidance for LTC facility, nursing home management	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services	Guidance for LTC facility management	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Guidance for retirement communities, independent living	Alzheimer's Association	Tips for professional caregivers
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Unless otherwise noted, all facts and statistics come from the 2020 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report available at alz.org/facts.