I’d like to invite a family member from outside my immediate household to visit. I am over 70 and have asthma. Can I do this safely?

Ottawa Public Health states that the risk of serious illness from COVID-19 increases progressively with age, particularly beyond 50 years of age. People who have serious underlying medical conditions (such as: cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic lung disease, chronic liver disease, cancer, are immunocompromised) or who are severely obese are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Every individual needs to consider their personal risk factors when making decisions about going out and remember to always be COVIDWise and SocialWise.

If you feel that having a family member from outside your immediate household visit is important for you and your mental health, here are some suggestions:

- If you can, try to meet outdoors instead of indoors.
- Practice physical distancing; stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) apart.
- Ask your family member to wear a mask.
- Ask your family member to practice hand hygiene and take respiratory precautions.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after the visit.
- Clean any objects or areas touched by your visiting family member after they have left (i.e., cups, doorknobs, counters, taps, etc).
- The province of Ontario now allows individuals to form groups of 10 or fewer people who agree to become part of an exclusive social circle amongst whom they may have closer contact. No one should be part of more than one circle. That means they agree to only join one circle, and physically distance with anyone outside the circle.

What is being done so that patients can keep 6 feet away from others at the hospital?
For example: most of the Ottawa hospital dialysis chairs are less than 3 feet away from each other.

Hospitals in Ottawa are following recommendations from the Ontario Ministry of Health. Each hospital in Ottawa has its own web page where you can learn about what services are open and what they are doing to limit the spread of COVID-19.

The Ottawa Hospital
Hôpital Montfort
Queensway Carleton Hospital
Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario

08/2020
When will public washrooms be opened to the public?
Ottawa has installed temporary portable washrooms and hand washing stations to help offset the closure of commercial and civic spaces. As more services open, more public washrooms will open as well.

Location of portable toilets:
- Somerset West Community Health Care Centre at 55 Eccles
- 574 Bank Street at Chamberlain
- 352 Somerset (at Bank)
- 172 Gigues at the Routhier Community Centre
- 120 Lisgar (Knox Presbyterian Church)

Location of facilities currently open:
- 180 Percy: McNabb Community Centre for washroom and shower
- 454 King Edward: Centre 454 for washroom and shower.

Public washrooms are also open at Britannia Park, Andrew Haydon Park, Westboro Beach, Mooney’s Bay Beach and Petrie Island Beaches.

Will Ottawa Public Health be developing guidelines for groups such as seniors’ social organizations as they begin preparations for re-opening?
The health and well-being of Ottawa residents are of vital importance to Ottawa Public Health. As stated within A Framework for Reopening our Province, protection for vulnerable populations and the practice of physical distancing, hand washing, respiratory hygiene, staying home when sick and significant mitigation plans to limit health risks will continue to be essential as we go forward. Ottawa Public Health will continue to work closely with city partners to ensure reopening is done in a safe way. As this is a rapidly evolving situation, please stay up to date by visiting the Ottawa Public Health COVID-19 page.

I would like to have a service or maintenance person visit my home. What’s the safest way to do this?
We recommend you review your specific needs and circumstance before making a decision to allow a service person or worker into your home.

Here are some recommendations for residents and workers on how to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 while having service/maintenance done to your home:

- Workers should conduct a COVID-19 Self-Assessment before entering the home/workplace and should stay home if they’re sick.
Ensure the service or maintenance person who is coming does not have any symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing, cold like symptoms, etc...) before entering.

Practice physical distancing; stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) apart.

If physical distancing is difficult to maintain, it is recommended that you and the worker wear a mask to help protect each other.

Wash hands with soap and water thoroughly and often. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or into an arm, not the hand.

Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth unless hands have just been washed.

Clean and disinfect areas the worker may have had contact with – doorknobs, faucets, counters, taps, etc.

Avoid physical contact such as handshakes and sharing pens.

Another suggestion, if you’re comfortable doing so, is to not stay in the same room as the worker while they are in your home (for example: go in the backyard or another room if you are having work done in a kitchen). If it can be done safely, you may want to consider leaving windows or the door open for added airflow.

I share/rent a cottage with members of my family outside my immediate household. How can we enjoy our cottage safely this summer?

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) strongly encourages residents to continue to only be in contact without physical distancing with members of their own household and to limit the additional number of people with whom they come into contact. This recommendation extends to shared homes such as cottages. Families that share a cottage with individuals outside their immediate household should avoid being at the cottage at the same time.

The province of Ontario now allows individuals to form groups of 10 or fewer people who agree to become part of an exclusive social circle amongst whom they may have closer contact. No one should be part of more than one circle. That means they agree to only join one circle, and physically distance with anyone outside the circle. The ministry website provides more information about how to maintain a social circle. Be aware that social circles do not provide a guarantee of safety. While individuals who are part of a 10 person (maximum) social circle can gather together at a cottage, they should remember that there is a higher risk of transmission of COVID-19 for every additional person with whom people come into close proximity. Older adults and people with chronic health conditions should remain vigilant because of the risk of more severe illness with COVID-19.

If families or social circles are staying in separate residences but sharing facilities like pools, docks, etc., extra caution should be taken to avoid close contact while using the shared facilities – go to the OPH website for more details. In addition, commonly shared, touched surfaces and items should be cleaned and disinfected frequently (e.g., at least once a day) to limit the potential spread of germs. Frequent hand hygiene (in particular, hand washing and not touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands) and respiratory etiquette help prevent the spread of the virus. Remember to be SocialWise!
When can I visit family members in retirement homes? Will it be allowed if everyone wore masks and were screened first?

The Ontario government has announced the gradual resumption of visits to long-term care homes, retirement homes, and other residential care settings, subject to strict health and safety protocols.

- Long-term care homes will allow outdoor/indoor visits of two people per resident at a time.
- Homes must not be in outbreak.
- Prior to each visit, the visitor must:
  - Pass an active screening questionnaire administered by home staff.
  - For indoor visits, visitors are required to have had a negative COVID-19 test within the previous two weeks and not subsequently tested positive.
  - Comply with infection, prevention and control (IPAC) protocols, including proper use of masks. Visitors should use a mask if the visit is outdoors. If the visit is indoors, a surgical/procedure mask must always be worn.
- For retirement homes, visitor admissions will vary from home to home depending upon their individual circumstances.
- Any non-adherence to home’s policies and procedures may result in discontinuation of visits.

In the event of an outbreak at an individual home or residential care setting, non-essential visits will again be restricted.

For detailed information, please visit the [Ontario Ministry of Health](https://www.ontario.ca/page/long-term-care-and-retirement-home-visiting-guideline).

How is testing for Retirement Residences and Long-Term Care Homes going? How effective will the results be if residents are asymptomatic?

Surveillance testing is the proactive COVID-19 testing of all residents and staff (those with and without symptoms) at a long-term care home (LTCH) or retirement home (RH). Surveillance testing helps Ottawa Public Health (OPH) better understand the current state of COVID-19 infections at a home and in Ottawa. The test results provide a snapshot of current infections to track where the virus has spread. OPH follows up immediately with homes and individuals (staff) if there is a positive test result.

For more information, please visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.ontario.ca/page/long-term-care-and-retirement-home-visiting-guideline) for Long-term care and Retirement Homes.