



# INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL RESOURCES

FOR YORK REGION RETIREMENT HOMES

MAY 2024

**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
1-877-464-9675  
TTY 1-866-512-6228

[york.ca/infectionprevention](http://york.ca/infectionprevention)

**York Region**

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An electronic version of this document is available on [york.ca/infectionprevention](http://york.ca/infectionprevention), under 'Infection Prevention Resources'.

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## Introduction

The *Retirement Homes Act, 2010* requires every licensed retirement home in Ontario to have an infection prevention and control (IPAC) program in place that meets the requirements stated in *Ontario Regulation 166/11* (The Regulation). A comprehensive IPAC program that is properly implemented can help prevent the transmission and spread of illness in the retirement home.

This document contains information and resources to assist York Region retirement homes in meeting these requirements. Please refer to the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, [www.rhra.ca](http://www.rhra.ca) for explanation of The Regulations pertaining to infection prevention and control.

## Public Health Inspections

Public health inspectors conduct food safety inspections at retirement homes that have 10 or more residents, and if applicable, inspections of swimming pools, whirlpools and personal service settings, such as hair salons. Public health inspectors also conduct IPAC inspections when an outbreak has been declared in a retirement home, as well as investigate complaints that could be related to a health hazard. The focus of an inspection can include any of the following areas:

- Cleaning and disinfection practices
- General maintenance and sanitation
- Hand hygiene, routine practices and additional precautions (including use of personal protective equipment)
- Outbreak response and implementation of control measures
- Policies and procedures review

To contact your area public health inspector, call York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 extension 4 or email: [health.inspectors@york.ca](mailto:health.inspectors@york.ca).

## Spa Services

Homes that offer spa services (e.g., hair salon, etc.) will be inspected on an annual basis to ensure compliance with best practices for infection prevention and control in personal service settings.

If your home has external independent health care provider's come into the facility to provide services (e.g., foot care, dental, etc.), a risk assessment and review of their infection prevention and control practices (i.e., audit) is to be completed by the home to ensure the provider is aligned with the current national, provincial and regulatory body standards and/or guidelines.

If your home offers manicure services as part of an activation program, please ensure best practices are followed as it relates to the sharing of tools (e.g., nail clippers, etc.) that are not designed to be single use. Shared tools that have not been cleaned and disinfected can lead to the spread of infections. Proper cleaning and disinfection is important to kill germs that cause infections.

Tools and work surfaces must first be cleaned with water and detergent to remove dirt and debris, then treated with a chemical solution called a disinfectant to kill germs. Bleach and alcohol are examples of common disinfectants.

Visit the York Region [Be Spa Safe](#) page for guidance on best practices for manicures. The following resources may also be helpful:

- [Aesthetic Manicures and Pedicures Factsheet](#)
- [Checklist for Manicure, Pedicure and Nail Treatment Services](#)
- [Preparing Household Bleach as a Disinfectant Instruction Sheet](#)



## Infectious Diseases and Prevention Reports



York Region public health conducts ongoing epidemiological surveillance on infectious diseases. The following reports can be obtained online by visiting [york.ca](http://york.ca) and selecting York Region>Statistic and Data>Health Statistics and Reports and then selecting the ribbon 'Infectious Diseases and Prevention'.

Examples of reports available are: Reportable Diseases in York Region 2000-2015; and Diseases of public Health Significance – Monthly Report

## Policy Review

A vital component of any infection prevention and control program is to have accurate policies available to staff to ensure they can obtain direction on infection prevention and outbreak management at any time.

The *Institutional/Facility Outbreak Management Protocol* was updated in 2023, and requires all congregate living settings (i.e., long-term care, retirement homes and group living settings) to review their written policies and procedures for outbreak prevention and response and ensure any recommendations from prior outbreaks and/or infection prevention and control audits are incorporated, at a minimum of every year. This includes a review of general infection prevention and control policies, as well as outbreak prevention and management procedures.

## Outbreak Surveillance & Management

According to the current regulation, every retirement home is required to have a surveillance protocol that sets out how the home will identify, document and monitor residents who report symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal illness. In addition, written procedures have to be established to ensure infectious disease outbreaks and/or any increases in the number of residents with symptoms are reported to York Region public health.



An outbreak may occur when an increased number of residents and/or staff experience similar symptoms, such as diarrhea and vomiting. Early reporting of a suspect outbreak, as well as practicing proper infection prevention and control measures, will decrease the number of residents and/or staff who become ill and reduce the duration of an outbreak.

## When to Suspect an Outbreak

### Respiratory infection outbreak:

- Two cases of acute respiratory infection occurring within 48 hours with any common epidemiological link (e.g., unit, floor, same caregiver, etc.); **OR**
- One laboratory-confirmed case of influenza

### Enteric infection outbreak:

- Two or more cases meeting the case definition with a common epidemiological link (e.g. specific unit or floor, same caregiver, etc.) with initial onset within a 48 hour period.
  - Suspect Outbreak Definition: If an outbreak is suspected, notify the local board of health to support with the investigation and management.

## Reporting an Outbreak

If you suspect there is an outbreak at your retirement home, notify York Region public health, **Infectious Diseases Control Division** immediately.

- Visit [Infectious Diseases and Outbreak Management | York Region](#) and click the 'Outbreak Reporting Form' button
- Email [CIDIntakeLine@york.ca](mailto:CIDIntakeLine@york.ca)
- Call: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73588, Monday to Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.
- Fax: 905-898-5213
- After hours, including weekends and holidays, call 905-953-6478

### Outbreak Management Meeting

Once an outbreak has been declared in your facility, an outbreak management meeting will be conducted with the public health investigator, public health inspector, and facility staff. Participants may include the Wellness manager, Administrator, nursing staff, environmental staff and dietary staff.

### Line Listing & Daily Reporting During An Outbreak

Effective management of outbreaks requires retirement homes to share the most up to date information of symptomatic residents and staff with the public health investigator. The facility should fax the line list to 905-660-4889 each weekday by noon. If there is any delay, please contact your public health investigator.

### Outbreak Guidelines & Resources by York Region Public Health

Visit [york.ca/outbreakmanagement](http://york.ca/outbreakmanagement) and [Health Care Professionals Resources | York Region](#) for resources including:

- [Cleaning Checklist for Ill Resident Rooms During an Outbreak](#)
- [Contact, Droplet](#), and [Droplet/Contact](#) Precaution signs
- [Control Measures Assessment Form for Outbreaks in LTCHs and RHs](#)
- Enteric Outbreak Line Listing – [Residents](#) or [Staff](#)
- General Test Requisition Form – [Enteric](#) or [Respiratory](#) (examples of how to complete)
- Respiratory Outbreak Line Listing – [Residents](#) or [Staff](#)

Additional resources are available on **Ministry of Health** website ([Ministry of Health | ontario.ca](http://Ministry of Health | ontario.ca))

- [Recommendations for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Institutions and Congregate Living Settings, April 2024](#)

## Education and Training

In accordance with The Regulation, retirement home licensees are required to provide education and training for residents, their substitute decision-maker(s), staff and volunteers on how to prevent transmission and spread of illness. Resources are available on the York Region website to help retirement homes achieve this requirement.



Visit [york.ca/infectionprevention](http://york.ca/infectionprevention) and click on “Preventing Infections”, then choose “Infection Prevention Resources” (at the bottom of the page) for printable resources on: hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, personal protective equipment and much more.

[Essential Caregiver Training](#) – York Region has developed a four-part online video training course called ‘How to Stop Infections from Spreading When Visiting Group Living Homes: Training for Essential Caregivers, Visitors and Families’. We encourage you to promote this course so visitors to your home learn practices to follow to help protect themselves, residents and staff from the spread of infection.

Additional resources are available on the **Public Health Ontario** website ([publichealthontario.ca](http://publichealthontario.ca)), including:

- [PIDAC Documents](#)\*  
Public Health Ontario (PHO) best practice documents are intended for use by healthcare workers in hospitals, long-term care facilities and community-based healthcare organizations; however, they can also give direction to retirement homes. Below are the suggested documents you should be familiar with:
  - \*These documents are updated regularly. For the most current version, visit the [PHO website](#).
  - [Best practices for hand hygiene in all health care settings](#)
  - [Best practices for prevention, surveillance and infection control management of novel respiratory infections in all health care settings](#)
  - [Best practices for environmental cleaning for prevention and control of infections in all health care settings](#)
  - [Best practices for infection prevention and control programs in Ontario in all health care settings](#)
  - [Routine practices and additional precautions in all health care settings](#)
    - Additional precautions signage and lanyard cards
    - [Annex A](#): Screening, testing and surveillance for antibiotic-resistant organisms (AROs) in all health care settings
    - [Annex B](#): Best practices for prevention of transmission of acute respiratory infection in all health care settings
    - [Annex C](#): Testing, surveillance and management of Clostridium Difficile in all health care settings

- [Just Clean Your Hands \(JCYH\) Program](#)  
This program was developed to help reduce health care-associated infections and the spread of infection by providing focused education and tools for promotion, evaluation and auditing to health care providers in long-term care and retirement homes.
- [Environmental Cleaning](#)  
Cleaning and disinfection of the physical environment in retirement homes is important to reduce the number of microorganisms that may be transmitted to other individuals. This link provides support and resources to assist environmental services managers and infection control professionals in providing training to staff on effective procedures for environmental cleaning.

## Respiratory Illness Prevention

Encourage staff, residents and visitors to protect themselves by learning about the spread of respiratory illnesses and how they can be prevented.

### COVID-19

Visit [COVID-19 | York Region](#) for more information on:

- COVID-19 in York Region
- COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics
- Symptoms, Transmission, Treatment and Testing
- Public Health Safety Measures



### Influenza

Visit [york.ca/flu](http://york.ca/flu) for more information on:

- Information about the flu and flu vaccine
- Avoiding the flu
- The role of York Region

Additional resources are available on:

**Ministry of Health** website visit [Protection from COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses | ontario.ca](#)

**Public Health Ontario** website ([publichealthontario.ca](http://publichealthontario.ca))

- [Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool](#)  
The Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool provides comprehensive epidemiological information of respiratory virus activity in Ontario, including COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses. Explore respiratory virus data including weekly case trends, laboratory testing, and outbreaks. The tool also contains additional COVID-19-specific data including: outcomes (hospitalizations, deaths, and ICU and hospital bed occupancy) and COVID-19 vaccination and dose administration.



## Vaccine Information

**Vaccine Ordering:** Please contact the Vaccine Inventory Program at 1-877-464-9675 Ext. 74033 or email [vaccineinventory@york.ca](mailto:vaccineinventory@york.ca)

**York Region Public Health Vaccine Information Line** - For issues or reports of any adverse events following immunization or general questions regarding vaccinations (all vaccinations, including COVID-19 and Influenza).

- Email address: [VaccineInformationLine@york.ca](mailto:VaccineInformationLine@york.ca)
- Telephone: 1-877-464-9675 ext.73452

## Tuberculosis Screening

Retirement home licensees are required to ensure that each resident is screened for tuberculosis (TB) within 14 days of commencing residency in the home; unless the resident has been screened not more than 90 days before commencing residency and the documented results of the screening are available to the licensee. In addition, staff have to be screened for tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. Please visit [york.ca/tb](http://york.ca/tb) for resources and services offered by York Region's TB Program.



Some resources that can be accessed on our website include:

- Active TB screening checklist for clinicians
- Tuberculosis Screening Recommendations in Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes
- Tuberculosis Screening FAQs for LTC and Retirement Homes

You can also call the TB Information Line at 1-877-464-9675, ext.76000 or email [TB@york.ca](mailto:TB@york.ca)

## Disclosure

In order to help the public to make informed decisions to protect their health, routine and complaint inspection reports of York Region establishments including food premises, pools, whirlpools, wading pools, splash pads, small drinking water systems, personal service settings and child care settings, are publicly disclosed online at [york.ca/yorksafes](http://york.ca/yorksafes).

## Food Safety

### YorkSafe Food Handler Certification



Licensees are required to ensure that whenever food is prepared in the retirement home, at least one person involved in preparing the food holds a current certificate in food handling.

In addition, the *Ontario Food Premises Regulation 493/17*, requires all food service premises to have at least one certified food handler at all times while open.

Visit [york.ca/foodsafety](http://york.ca/foodsafety) for more details including our online registration process.

### Food Recalls

York Region uses the RAVE Notification system to provide premises including retirement homes in York Region with urgent health information in a timely manner regarding food recalls, drinking water advisories, health advisories, heat alerts and other important public health issues.

When a food recall alert is initiated by York Region public health, you will receive a notification either through email or telephone. We ask that you respond to these notifications through one of the methods as quickly as possible. Your response to the questions will help us determine what actions, if necessary, should be taken and to gauge the effectiveness of the recall.

For more information and to sign up for *Food Recall and Allergen Alerts*, visit CFIA's website at [Canadian Food Inspection Agency / Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments \(canada.ca\)](http://Canadian Food Inspection Agency / Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments (canada.ca))

## Water Outage Plan

Retirement home licensees should have a water outage plan detailing the temporary measures that will be put in place in the event of a planned or unplanned situation where the drinking water is affected to ensure the safety of the residents in the home.

The plan should include information on: communications that need to take place in the event of a water outage; how drinking water will be supplied; how food will be prepared; how/if dishwashing will take place; how hand hygiene and personal hygiene will be performed; how laundry will be processed; how cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces, devices and equipment will be completed; any medical procedure considerations; pool and/or spa operation; personal services operations; enhanced surveillance for enteric illnesses and steps to take once the drinking water is available again.

More information on this can be obtained by contacting York Region [Health Connection](http://Health Connection) at [health.inspections@york](mailto:health.inspections@york), 1-800-361-5653, ex 4 or TTY 1-866-512-6228. If you are reporting a water situation outside of regular office hours, please call 1-800-335-0111.

## Extreme Weather Conditions

Retirement home licensees are required to ensure that there are procedures in place for responding to extreme heat and cold weather conditions. York Region public health notifies the public during extreme temperature events that may impact health (such as heat warnings and extreme cold weather) through media releases and social media.



Stakeholders whose clientele may be more vulnerable to extreme heat, such as retirement homes, are also directly notified by email when a heat warning or extended heat warning has been issued for York Region. Extra precautions should be taken to reduce the risk of illness that may be experienced by older adults during hot and humid weather. This may include more frequent checks and encouraging residents to stay cool and hydrated.

For additional resources, please visit [york.ca/extremeheat](http://york.ca/extremeheat) and [york.ca/extremecold](http://york.ca/extremecold)

## Pets Residing In or Visiting a Retirement Home

Retirement homes may have pets residing on-site or pet visitation programs that provide opportunities for residents to interact with animals. Some retirement homes may also allow residents to own a pet. While the animal-human interactions provide benefits such as companionship and comfort to residents, animals can pose a risk of infectious diseases transmission, such as rabies.



Retirement homes should develop a written policy that includes the following areas:

- Type of animals permitted as resident pets or in the pet visitation program
- Care of pets residing in the retirement home
- Location and care of pet dwellings in the retirement home
- Interaction of pets with residents, including supervision and hand hygiene requirements
- Vaccination requirements and records keeping
- Procedure to report animal bites and scratches

The following resources are available to assist retirement home licensees to mitigate the risk of transmitting infectious diseases from animals to residents and provide guidance on what should be covered in policies related to pets.

- [Pets in Facilities – Guidelines for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes](#)
- [Pet Care Cage and Crate Cleaning Poster](#)

In the event that a resident or staff is exposed to the saliva of an animal through a bite, or is scratched or licked on an area of broken skin, the incident must to be reported directly to York Region public health for the appropriate follow-up by calling 1-800-361-5653 extension 4.

To help reduce the incidence of rabies, low-cost rabies clinics for dogs and cats are promoted throughout York Region. Dates and locations of rabies clinics can be found on the [York Region Events Calendar](#).

For any infection prevention and control inquiries, please contact York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 extension 4 or email [health.inspectors@york.ca](mailto:health.inspectors@york.ca).

