

May 21, 2021

Dear Residents, Family Members and Employees,

I am writing to give you an update on things that are happening at St. Francis. We have had a good week this past week and residents and tenants are enjoying the changes that we have put in place in the last several weeks based on the new guidelines. I wanted to review the newest guidance that we have to make sure that you are all aware of these changes.

Vaccinated employees no longer need to participate in regular surveillance testing. The majority of our employees are vaccinated so this will significantly reduce the amount of testing that we need to perform on a regular basis. Unvaccinated staff still need to be tested weekly or monthly depending on the positivity rate that we have in our community. If we have any employee with symptoms than we are required to test them. If we have any positive tests that we go back into response testing. We are now testing monthly and are not due to test again until June.

As part of our screening process visitors will be asked if they have been vaccinated. They are not required to provide proof of the vaccine. Vaccinated visitors and vaccinated residents may visit without masks and may be in close contact with one another. Masks are still required in the hallways to and from rooms or the front living room where most visits will continue to take place. In any instance where both vaccinated and unvaccinated staff, residents, or visitors are present, all those present must wear masks and must socially distance from one another. Compassionate care visits in residents' rooms will continue as they have been. Please continue to call Mindy to schedule your visits at ext. 330. You may also schedule window or electronic visits. Tasha can help with this at ext. 313.

Residents who have their meals in the dining rooms and participate in group activities are not required to wear masks if everyone in the room is fully vaccinated. Social distancing will no longer be required as well. If any resident or employee in the room is not vaccinated then everyone in the room will be required to put on their masks and those who are not vaccinated must socially distance from the others. Residents and staff members will still be required to wear their masks in the hallways. Dietary staff will now be able to serve the residents in the dining room and go to the resident rooms to take menu orders. All of the employees in our dietary department are vaccinated so this provides an added benefit for our residents. The residents enjoyed a wonderful scenic bus ride this week which is our first of many I hope. Residents are also going to Mass in the chapel now which is offered by Father Dick Thompson on Wednesdays. We will also have communion services on Tuesday and Thursdays in the chapel.

Residents are permitted to go on car rides with family members and visit in family members homes. The guidance around this is that the residents and family members should be vaccinated. We ask that you call 24 hours in advance for prescreening questions and be screened prior to taking your loved one out. Please see the attached guidance which will should help you.

I also wanted to let you know that Tasha has given her notice and her last day at St. Francis will be May 27. We are sad to see her leave and we are actively recruiting her replacement. Cindy Edgecomb will be available on Tuesday and Fridays for the time being.

While we know this is an incredibly challenging time for you and your family, please be assured that we remain committed to the care and support of your loved one here at St. Francis. Their safety, health and well-being remain our firm commitment.

We will continue to keep you updated as time goes on.

God bless,

Brenda Buttrick RN, LNHA
Administrator

RESIDENT TRIPS OUTSIDE FACILITY

These guidelines are based on current CDC and Federal requirements and are subject to change as the guidance is updated. As you know, the state guidance has been lifted, but nursing homes are required to follow CDC and CMS directives. We are slowly normalizing, but not as fast as the outside world. The rate of COVID-19 in nursing homes has decreased dramatically. We ask that you help to protect our residents and staff when you take your loved one for a car ride, whether that be to an appointment, your home to visit family, or to a restaurant.

- The safest trip is going for a car ride and not stopping anywhere, with all passengers in the car vaccinated at this point in the pandemic. Please have all passengers wear masks and the windows down if weather permits, as a car is considered a small enclosed space.
- If you stop for an ice cream, we ask that you sit outside on a bench or a picnic table, while you have your masks off enjoying your ice cream. It is always safest to be outside when masks are removed. Please wear masks when you are not actively enjoying your ice cream.
- Going to a restaurant is not advisable at this time, but if you do dine out, please consider going at times before or after the noon or dinner rush. Many restaurants are no longer enforcing the wearing of masks and the fewer people you encounter, the safer it will be for everyone. Maybe consider a late lunch at 2 pm or an early dinner at 4 or 4:30. If eating outside is an option, this would be preferable over dining indoors. If your server approaches without a mask, please ask him or her to put one on. If everyone in your party is fully vaccinated, you may bring take-out food from a restaurant to the facility and enjoy your meal while all together.
- Home Visits with Family - This gets a little tricky and will vary depending on who is present during the visit. If you are indoors and everyone in the group is vaccinated, masks may be removed for short periods of time, with social distancing. This applies even in a small group. When visiting indoors, open some windows for ventilation, weather permitting. If you are outdoors and everyone in your small group is vaccinated, you may consider taking off your masks for short periods, while maintaining social distancing of 6 feet. If unvaccinated visitors are present, everyone should keep their masks on for the entire visit.
- A visit home with unvaccinated family requires more caution, however we understand there may be times when unvaccinated individuals are present, such as young children. If you are just going for a car ride with no stops, please keep some windows open and have everyone keep their mask on at all times and social distance as much as possible while in the vehicle. Remember even fully vaccinated people can get COVID-19 and can spread it. Families have been separated for more than a year and of course we understand that nothing is going to stop a grandparent from hugging their grandchild. It is important for families to begin to establish such connections again. We do ask that this physical contact be limited and when there is physical touch, both people should wear a mask, unless the child is under 2 years old and unable to wear a mask.
- A visit home to go to a party with a large group of people, especially if there will be both vaccinated and unvaccinated guests, is not recommended at this time. If there is an upcoming event, such as a wedding, graduation or some other type of special occasion that would really be important to your loved one, please discuss this in advance along with the type of event, number of guests, etc., with the Director of Nursing, the Assistant Director of Nursing or the Administrator. We want your loved one to enjoy such an important family occasion, and we can work together to help ensure the event is attended as safely as possible. We are committed to keeping all the residents in our care safe, so depending on the circumstances, or if we feel there has been a potential exposure, we may need to have your loved one quarantine after returning to the facility for a period of time. It is helpful to us to know this in advance so we can plan a smooth transition.

Small group visits with everyone vaccinated is always safest. Outside is best – Let's take advantage of the nicer weather now.

Generally, exposing residents to unvaccinated people in the community, who may not mask, is NOT recommended. We hope you will assist us in keeping our community and residents safe. Please share your plans with us, so we can offer guidance. Keeping communication open will avoid any surprises.

These lifts in restrictions have been a long time coming and we are very happy our residents and families are able to socialize and be together again. Our goal is to keep everyone safe so we will be able to maintain and continue loosening restrictions as guided by the CDC and CMS. Thank you for your cooperation. Please contact us with any questions.