



# Renfrew County and District Health Unit

*“Optimal health for all in Renfrew County and District”*

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Dear families and/or visitors,

This year, Thanksgiving celebrations are going to look and feel different as we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect our loved ones in long-term care and retirement homes (LTC/RHs), we must work hard to limit close contact with others and consider celebrating only with people in our own households. We can still celebrate with our loved ones in LTC/RHs, but we need to consider how to celebrate safely.

It is important to remember that older adults, and those with underlying health conditions, are more likely to experience serious illness from COVID-19. Therefore, we all must consider the risk that our personal actions may have on those we plan to visit. To reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 this holiday weekend, please consider:

- Limiting holiday gatherings to household members only. *Less people, less risk.*
- Limiting the length of time that you gather if you do visit a loved one. *Less time, less risk.*
- Celebrating with loved ones in LTC/RHs through virtual platforms such as phone or video, especially if family members are at increased risk of severe illness.
- Assessing your recent travel and potential exposure to the virus, including time spent in closed spaces, in close contact with others, and crowded spaces.
- Following all LTC/RH protocols for visitors. Wear a mask/face covering indoors and outdoors, or as directed.
- **Not** visiting if you have any symptoms, even if they are mild. Stay home, self-isolate and get tested.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) understands the importance of being social and the impact it has on mental health and well-being, especially around the holidays. However, the health, safety and well-being of residents, clients, families and staff members in Renfrew County and District's LTC/RHs remains a top priority.

Let's work together to mark this holiday with happiness, not illness. This means thinking carefully about visiting loved ones in LTC/RHs. No one wants to be the person who spreads COVID-19 to their loved ones.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Cushman, Acting Medical Officer of Health, RCDHU