



During the COVID-19 pandemic, should I or my family member go to live with family or stay in the long-term care or nursing home?

It can be hard to decide about leaving a long-term care or nursing home during the pandemic. Working through the 6 steps of this decision aid can help prepare you and your loved ones to better discuss your options with your/your family member's care providers.

This decision aid is for you if: Check ☒ one

- ☐ You live in an Ontario long-term care or nursing home because your care needs could not be safely met in the community. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic you are thinking about going to live with family* and are deemed capable of making your own decisions about place of care.
Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-long-term-care>
- ☐ You are a legal substitute decision maker (e.g. have power of attorney for personal care) for a family member living in an Ontario long-term care or nursing home who has been assessed as incapable of making decisions about place of care. Due the COVID-19 pandemic, you are thinking about taking your family member to live in the community with family*.
Source: <https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/pgt/incapacity/poa.php>
- ☐ You are a family member who is affected by this decision. As you use this decision aid, keep in mind that the resident or legal substitute decision maker is responsible for requesting a formal discharge from the long-term care or nursing home and for the discharged resident's care, safety and well-being.
Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r20083>

Step 1: Why are you thinking of leaving your/your family member's current place of care?

Why?

For how long?

Step 2: What care is required and who can provide it in the family home?

Before deciding, you need to know what care needs to be given in the family home. Speak to a registered nurse or doctor to get the details about the required amount of care such as:

- monitoring personal safety and wellbeing 24 hours a day,
- personal care needs (e.g. moving/transferring, toileting/ incontinence care, eating/drinking, hygiene, oral care, dressing, grooming),
- medicines, treatments, dietary needs, social needs and other medical, nursing care needs

When you have the details, list each care item and think about the steps to ensure that this care can be given in the family home. Beside each care item, identify **who** has the skills to give it, **how many people** are needed to give it (e.g. 2 people to transfer to chair), and **how often** it is given during a 24-hour day. For how many weeks can people give care? Can it be given until it's time to return to the long-term care or nursing home? Do you need outside home care workers (e.g., privately hired or government-funded through the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN))? Are they available?

Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r20083>

*This decision aid refers to a family home, but some may be thinking about going to a friend's home.

Step 3: Is the family home safe and can the required care needs be given there?

Check ☒ yes, no, or n/a (does not apply)

Can the required care that your doctor/nurse identified be given until re-admission?

- Can someone be home 24 hours a day to check for safety and wellbeing? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Can the daily help that is needed with personal support be given (e.g. moving/transferring, toileting/ incontinence care, eating/drinking, hygiene, oral care, dressing, grooming) ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Can medications be given at the right dose and time each day? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Can other needed care that your doctor/nurse identified be given? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Can you or your family access either government-funded or private care workers to fill in any potential gaps? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Can you get access to a doctor or nurse if you/your family member's medical needs change? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Can you/ your family member be self-isolated* for the first 2 weeks to prevent COVID-19 spread?

- Do you and your family know the rules for self-isolating and agree to stay self-isolated for 2 weeks? <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus#section-10> ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Will you/your family member have a separate bedroom to self-isolate? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Will you/your family member have a separate bathroom or a shared bathroom that can be disinfected before/after use? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Is there adequate protection and supplies available for the 2-week self-isolation period and beyond (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, cleaning products)? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Are there other safety features in the family's home?

- Is there a call button or room monitor to call for help? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Are there grab bars for the bath, shower, toilet for safe bathing and toileting? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Is the toilet easy to use (e.g., raised toilet seat, arms, and/or commode)? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Is there space wide enough to rotate a walker or wheelchair in the bathroom and bedroom? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Is it easy and safe to get into the family home (e.g., no steps, or a ramp)? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Is it easy and safe to move within the family's home (e.g., no stairs or steps from living area to bedroom)? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Is the bed easy to get in and out of bed (e.g., partial side rail, hospital bed that can be lowered and raised to prevent back injuries when people help with personal care)? (e.g. hospital beds may be available to rent) ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
- Can access to the stairs be blocked off to prevent a fall if you/your family member is confused and/or wanders? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Step 4: Do you know the new rules for discharge and re-admission due to the pandemic?

Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r20083>

Before deciding about leaving, you need some facts about Ontario's new COVID-19 pandemic rules. They make it easier and faster for most people to be discharged and re-admitted to the same long-term care or nursing home.

Facts about discharge. Talk to the long-term care or nursing home staff about the formal steps for discharge. Keep in mind that you/your substitute decision maker:

- will need a written report from the long-term care home describing **the required care after discharge**,
- should take all reasonable steps to ensure that all needed care is given after discharge
- are fully responsible for you/your family member's care, safety and well-being after discharge
- need to contact the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) to assign you a Care Coordinator (who can assess the person's home care needs and arrange government funded home care, if available) before discharge and/or who will help to manage the re-admission.

While away, your long-term care or nursing home is allowed to give your/your family member's room to another person on the waiting list. So, you/your family member may not return to the same room or unit when you decide to return. If your/your family member's absence is more than 3 months, the same care home may not be able to provide the required care if care needs change significantly.

Facts about re-admission. The LHIN Care Coordinator understands the formal steps and will help with the re-admission process. Keep in mind that the steps will depend on how long it has been since discharge:

- If discharge was **3 months or less**, your long-term care home or nursing home and LHIN Care Coordinator will approve your re-admission. As a returning resident due to the pandemic, you will be given the highest priority for the next vacant bed that meets your care needs. But if the type of room you will need is not as readily available (e.g. in a specialized dementia unit), there may be a wait until the type of room you require is available.
- If discharge was **more than 3 months ago**, your long-term care or nursing home will need information about **changes in your required care needs** to make sure the home still has the right skill sets and physical environment to provide this care. Your LHIN Care Coordinator will assess your needs using faster steps to provide this information.
 - If the home **can** provide your required care, it approves re-admission. As a returning resident, you have the highest priority for the next vacant bed. But there may be a wait until the type of room you require is available.
 - If the home is **unable** to provide the care you need, your LHIN Care Coordinator will help you find a long-term care or nursing home that can serve your needs as quickly as possible. You/your substitute decision maker have the final say on whether to be admitted to that long-term care or nursing home.

Step 5: Which reasons to choose each option matter most to you?

Possible reasons to choose or avoid each option are shown below. Add others that apply. Show how much each reason matters **to you** using 0 to 5 ★★★★★ stars. '0' means it does **not matter at all**. '5' means it **matters a great deal**. Ask another person to use the stars too.

	Reasons to Choose this Option Benefits / Advantages / Pros	How much it matters to you: 0 ★ not at all 5 ★ a great deal		Reasons to Avoid this Option Harms / Disadvantages / Cons	How much it matters to you: 0 ★ not at all 5 ★ a great deal	
		Person 1	Person 2		Person 1	Person 2
 Option #1 Stay in long-term care or nursing home	Staff can provide needed care 24 hours a day including for medical emergencies	★★★★★	★★★★★	Possibility of limited staff and services due to pandemic	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Reduce risk of spreading COVID19 to family and getting it from family.	★★★★★	★★★★★	Risk of getting COVID-19 from staff or other residents	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Access to needed safety features, equipment, care supplies, COVID-19 protective supplies.	★★★★★	★★★★★	Possibility of limited methods to prevent/manage COVID-19 outbreak.	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Feel closer to the residents/staff at the long-term care or nursing home and feel more comfortable with routines and room	★★★★★	★★★★★	Limited or no access to family/friend visitors reduces their practical/emotional support	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Less risk of burning out my family/friend(s)	★★★★★	★★★★★	Risk/fear of dying alone/not being able to say goodbye	★★★★★	★★★★★
	List other reasons	★★★★★	★★★★★	List other reasons	★★★★★	★★★★★
	List other reasons	★★★★★	★★★★★	List other reasons	★★★★★	★★★★★
 Option #2 Go to live with family	Reduce risk of resident getting COVID-19 from staff or other residents in the long-term care or nursing home	★★★★★	★★★★★	Risk of bringing COVID-19 into the family home or getting COVID-19 from family or home care workers	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Family can provide needed care possibly with outside help or services.	★★★★★	★★★★★	Family or outside care workers are unable give needed care until return to long-term care or nursing home	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Family can manage changes in condition and/or access medical care	★★★★★	★★★★★	Family is unable to manage changes in condition or access medical care	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Closer to family/friend(s) for emotional support. Feel more reassured and secure.	★★★★★	★★★★★	Family/friend's home needs changes (e.g. grab bars, ramp, blocked stairs). It may be difficult to find someone to make the changes or to pay for them	★★★★★	★★★★★
	More control over daily routines	★★★★★	★★★★★	Uncertain if/when I can return to long-term care and nursing home	★★★★★	★★★★★
	List other reasons	★★★★★	★★★★★	List other reasons	★★★★★	★★★★★
	List other reasons	★★★★★	★★★★★	List other reasons	★★★★★	★★★★★

Which option do you prefer? Check ☒ one.

☐ Stay in long-term care or nursing home

☐ Go to live with family

☐ I'm not sure

Step 6: What else do you need to make a decision?

6.1 How comfortable you feel making this decision

Check ☒ one



Do you know enough about the **benefits and harms** of each option? ☐ Yes ☐ No



Are you clear about which benefits and harms **matter most** to you? ☐ Yes ☐ No



Do you have enough **support** and **advice** to make a choice? ☐ Yes ☐ No



Do you **feel sure** about the best choice for you? ☐ Yes ☐ No

The SURE Test © O'Connor & Légaré, 2008

6.2 What are the next steps?

Check ☒ the things you need to do before you make this choice.

- ☐ I need to discuss the options with _____
- ☐ I need to learn more about my options _____
- ☐ Other. Please specify _____

This information is not intended to replace the advice of one's doctor or registered nurse. It was designed to prepare people to discuss options with their long-term care home medical and nursing staff and others. While we have tried to reflect the state of general knowledge in the field and current information from Ontario Canada at the date of publication, and suggested where to get more information, we do not accept responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors or omissions.

Authors: D Stacey RN PhD, C Ludwig RN, PhD(c), J Lavoie MSW RSW, S Sinha MD DPhil FRCP

Contributors: K Babulic BSc(PT), BSc N Edwards RN (non-practicing), PhD,

Decision Aid Format Editor: A O'Connor PhD based on [International Standards](#), the [Ottawa Decision Aid Template](#) and the [Ottawa Personal Decision Guide](#) © 2015, A O'Connor, D Stacey, University of Ottawa, Canada.

Last reviewed: April 15, 2020. **Reading level:** Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 6.5

Funding: University of Ottawa Research Chair in Knowledge Translation to Patients, held by D Stacey RN, PhD

References: 1. Edwards N, Dulai J & Rahman A. (2019). A Scoping Review of Epidemiological, Ergonomic and Longitudinal Cohort Studies Examining the Links between Stair and Bathroom Falls and the Built Environment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2. Blanchet R & Edwards N. (2018). A need to improve the assessment of environmental hazards for falls on stairs and in bathrooms: Results of a scoping review. *BMC Geriatrics*. DOI: 10.1186/s12877-018-0958-1. 3. Boland L et al., 2017 Impact of home care versus alternative locations of care on elder health outcomes: an overview of systematic reviews. *BMC Geriatrics* 17;20. 4. Stacey D et al., (2017) [Decision aids for people facing health treatment or screening decisions](#). Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 5. April 2-14, 2020 Canadian media releases relevant to this decision (viewers'/readers' comments). 6. Sources accessed April 15, 2020:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-long-term-care>

<https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/pgt/incapacity/poa.php>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r20083>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus#section-10>

<http://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/Documents/pr/ltc-mohltc-ltcha-guide-phase-1-1206-en.pdf>