



December 18, 2020

Message to Duncaster Residents and Families

Michael A. O'Brien, President and CEO

The exciting news this week was the official notification that all Caleb Hitchcock Health Center residents and employees will be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in Phase 1a. Three vaccine administration clinics will be conducted on site by CVS. The first will occur on December 27<sup>th</sup> and the second on January 17<sup>th</sup>. A 3<sup>rd</sup> vaccine clinic date will be assigned closer to the date. These dates have been assigned based on CVS' availability and there is no negotiation of the dates and times. The vaccine is administered in two doses, 3-4 weeks apart.

Assisted Living residents are also included in Phase 1a and we have been notified that their vaccination date will be sometime in early January. Dates for Independent Living residents and all other Duncaster staff (Phase 1b) have yet to be announced; however, we anticipate they will begin in the first quarter of 2021, possibly as soon as January. It is anticipated that Phase 2 will begin in June 2021 and include those under 18 and remaining people over 18.

This positive news was tempered by the discouraging news that across Connecticut and throughout the country COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths are rising. Connecticut is now in the "red" zone of substantial spread and the 7-day positivity rate is 6.46%. We have learned over the past months that the spread of infections on campus mimics the community spread and unfortunately Duncaster is not immune to the spread. At this time we have a total of four cases of COVID-19 among Independent Living residents-two in Prospect and two in Gillette. Duncaster reacted immediately to contain the spread of the virus and we have completed our contact tracing and case investigation. Exposure risk varies based on the situation and each individual resident and staff member has received appropriate quarantining and other information based on their particular scenario. It appears that while it's impossible to pinpoint the exact source of exposure, our best educated guess points to exposure outside the walls of Duncaster. Appropriate infection control procedures and sanitizing have been implemented. Please keep these residents in your thoughts as they navigate this unforgiving virus.

As a result of our current situation, and out of an abundance of caution, we are pausing all group programs and activities (fitness classes, programs, art classes etc.) until January 7<sup>th</sup>, the next testing date for Independent Living residents. Since information is likely to change at a moment's notice please listen carefully to the daily messages and note the weekly calendar for any updates. I would also strongly urge you to avoid

gatherings in groups of people (cocktails, card games etc.) for the next several weeks. We need to contain any potential spread of the virus and together we will. While it doesn't feel good, we know that it is the right thing to do.

In addition, as the COVID-19 numbers continue to surge in Connecticut and the Greater Hartford area, we continue to be closed to visitors and ask that Independent and Assisted Living residents only leave the campus if absolutely necessary. Use an abundance of caution for any doctor's appointments or hospital visits. If you are experiencing symptoms (listed below) please let the Assisted Living nurses (ext. 5152) know so that they can assess you. We have the ability to do rapid testing and contact tracing. If you do not feel well, do not go out of your apartment.

**Most common symptoms include:**

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Tiredness

**Less common symptoms:**

- Aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Conjunctivitis
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- A rash on skin, or discoloration of fingers or toes

**Serious symptoms:**

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Loss of speech or movement

On average it takes 5–6 days from when someone is infected with the virus for symptoms to show, however it can take up to 14 days. Duncaster considers someone as infectious until they have cleared by their Doctor.

**Quarantine, isolation and self-monitoring: What is the difference?**

- **Quarantine** keeps someone who has had a high or medium risk exposure to the virus away from others outside of their home. Steps to take: Stay home and monitor your health for 14 days after your last contact with a person who has COVID-19. Report any symptoms. You can go for a walk outside or a ride in your car, just avoid contact with others.

- **Self-monitoring** is for someone who has had a low risk exposure to take extra precautions. Steps to take: Monitor your health and report any symptoms, please wear your mask, stay 6 feet away from others and limit the length of time you are with others to under 15 minutes. Limit your activity to only essential events.
- **Isolation** keeps someone who is infected with the virus away from others, even in their home. Steps to take: Stay home and follow doctor's orders. Do not travel in hallways.

### **What makes an exposure risk a high, medium or low?**

- **High Risk:** Contact with a person who is positive for COVID-19 (during the infectious period beginning two days prior to symptoms) indoors, within 6 feet, for more than 15 minutes, without consistent masking for all people.
- **Medium Risk:** Contact with a person who is positive for COVID 19 (during the infectious period beginning two days prior to symptoms) indoors, within 6 feet, for more than 15 minutes, with consistent masking for all people.
- **Low Risk:** Contact with a person who is positive for COVID -19 (during the infectious period beginning two days prior to symptoms) indoors, greater than 6 feet, for more than 15 minutes, with masks worn by all people.

### **Mask wearing:**

Diligent mask wearing is more important now than ever. Please be sure that your mask is clean, properly fitting to avoid gaps and fully covers your mouth AND nose.

As a result of the current positive cases in our community we have updated our guidance on relative risk for various activities during the holiday season (see below). In addition please think intentionally if you are visiting your loved ones off campus. I need to remind everyone to wear your mask religiously, wash your hands, and keep six feet or more apart. We are not in "lockdown" for Independent Living, but we are urging you to think twice before going off campus. As I have said so many times before, we have come so far, let's not let our guard down, particularly now. There is tangible hope in the vaccine, but now we must protect ourselves and each other.

Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday season. Be well and be safe.

### **Holiday Family Guidelines for Duncaster Residents, Staff and Families**

With the holidays upon us it is important for all of us to continue to be as vigilant and careful as we have been for the past ten months.

We are well into the second COVID-19 surge, and as the Thanksgiving holiday demonstrated, even small family gatherings can lead to increased cases in the community at large. We tend to let our guard down around people we love. We are still seeing the effects of Thanksgiving gatherings, and we therefore need to be even more careful in the coming weeks. It is not a good feeling to be told that you have been exposed to someone who has COVID. Even if everyone thinks they are being safe, exposure still could occur and the consequences could be deadly.

We strongly discourage residents from gathering with friends or family. However, if you do decide to gather in person, here are some guidelines that help minimize risk, but do not eliminate it. The only truly safe approach is to avoid gathering in person at all.

#### Before any gathering:

- Self-Isolate: Ask everyone to minimize their activities and opportunities for exposure for two weeks prior to gathering.
- Ask people to get tested a few days beforehand. Tests are accessible and covered by insurance. Remember to self-isolate as much as possible after your test, to prevent catching it afterwards.
- Keep it small-the fewer people and fewer households, the better.
- Find out if those attending share your concerns about COVID-19. Is everyone comfortable telling others if they wake up feeling sick the day of?

#### During the gathering:

- Social Distance: Keep six feet apart to minimize spread.
- Reduce the time you spend together: Can you shorten the celebration?
- Wear masks during downtime: All guests should wear masks when not eating.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer frequently, especially before eating or drinking.
- Don't share serving utensils and other items.

#### Traditional Christmas and New Year Alternatives

- Consider sharing a meal virtually by connecting with friends and family over Zoom or by phone this holiday season.
- Families can also drop off a holiday meal for loved ones at Duncaster. Please arrange for a contact-free outdoor drop off at the resident neighborhood entrance. Alternatively, meals can be dropped off at the Aquatic Center Entrance and they will be delivered to the resident's apartment.

#### Other Holiday Guidance:

### Lower risk activities

- Having a small (5 people or fewer), masked outdoor visit or walk with other residents or local family and friends.
- Having a small dinner with only people who live in your household.
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family or friends, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others.
- Having a virtual dinner, tea, or cocktail party with friends and family.
- Curbside pickup at a restaurant or grocery store.
- Shopping online rather than in person.
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home.
- Going for a drive to enjoy the winter scenery or lights.

### Moderate risk activities

- Visiting a public park where wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing.
- Going to the grocery store during senior hours (residents) or early in the morning (staff).
- Doctor visits and trips to the hospital.
- Going to the post office, pharmacy, cleaners, bank or a lawyer's office.
- Indoor pick-up at restaurant or coffee shop of pre-ordered take-out food.

### Higher risk activities

- Going shopping at the mall or in any crowded retail store.
- Attending religious services.
- Visiting a hair or nail salon.
- Going to the grocery store during peak shopping hours.
- Dining indoors at a restaurant.
- Visiting an offsite fitness center.
- Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household.