

Date: June 25, 2021

To: AHS Continuing Care Operators
ZEOCs
IPC
Public Health

From: AHS Provincial Seniors' Health and Continuing Care

RE: Guidance Update: Use of Fans and Air Conditioners in Continuing Care Settings

Please share the following information broadly within your Zones and continuing care teams.

Effective immediately, AHS is temporarily lifting limitations on the use of portable fans and air conditioners that were put into place due to COVID-19.

Today, June 25, Environment Canada issued [heat warnings](#) for municipalities in each AHS Zone. A prolonged, dangerous, and potentially historic heat wave will begin this weekend in Alberta and is expected to last through next week. Little to no reprieve from the heat is expected, as overnight lows will remain between 15 and 20 degrees Celsius.

The duration and magnitude of this heat event will lead to increased risk of heat-related illness, which residents of continuing care and supportive living settings are more vulnerable to. We recognize that portable bedside fans and air conditioners are considered a risk for enhancing transmission of respiratory droplets and the spread of COVID-19.

However, considering the high rate of COVID-19 immunization amongst continuing care and supportive living residents and low COVID-19 case numbers in these settings and in the community, portable fans and air conditioners may be used, in conjunction with other cooling strategies. This includes: dehumidifiers, ice packs, adequate hydration and providing cross breezes by opening windows. Alternative measures for cooling should still be considered prior to fans or portable air conditioners.

Staff must continue to follow the manufacturer's instructions to clean, disinfect and maintain fans and air conditioners on a scheduled basis, e.g., daily, weekly, monthly.

AHS guidelines for use of bedside fans and air conditioners were created by the AHS Infection Prevention and Control physician team. The current guidelines have been temporarily rescinded and we will let you know when they are updated.



We recommend staff monitor residents for symptoms of heat stroke or heat exhaustion, such as high body temperature, lack of sweat, confusion, fainting, and unconsciousness.

Pay particular attention to individuals that can experience earlier or more severe effects from heat including individuals with pre-existing lung, heart, kidney, nervous system, mental health or diabetic conditions.

More information can be found at ahs.ca/heat.

The safety of all residents in the continuing care system is and continues to be our top priority.

Thank you for your continued support.