



December 17, 2021

### COVID & Holiday Reminders

For the safety of our residents, guests & employees, we are taking the following precautions.

1. Anyone under the age of 18 is not permitted to visit during the flu season (October 2021 through March 2022).
2. Holiday Decorations must be labeled as flame retardant or their original container must state the decorations are flame retardant." Combustible decorations shall be prohibited in any health care occupancy unless they are flame retardant.
3. I have attached copies of the following documents relating to foods brought in for our residents – "Safe Handling of Foods from Home" and "Food Brought in by Families and Friends Policy".
4. We are continuing to test our unvaccinated employees & contractors two times a week for COVID-19 and test our vaccinated employees & contractors one time a month for COVID-19.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we focus on keeping residents' safety as our top priority.

Happy Holidays to All & Best Wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely,

Peter A. Panos

Administrator

## Safe Handling of Foods from Home

In the Long Term Care setting, we are required to follow regulations established by the federal and state government to protect residents from food borne illness. This includes foods brought in to residents by family and friends. Our goal is to ensure that foods are handled, prepared, and stored safely.


With this in mind, we are asking that families and friends abide by the following guidelines.

- Care should be taken to ensure that all produce such as melons and tomatoes have been thoroughly scrubbed at home to remove dirt that can carry *E. coli* which can get into the fruit when it is cut.
- Alfalfa sprouts are not recommended because they can carry harmful bacteria and are extremely difficult to wash properly.
- Undercooked eggs and raw milk should not be served to this population. Other high risk foods include meats, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy products, tofu and cooked rice. These foods are more likely than others to provide an environment where bacteria can grow if not prepared and stored properly.
- Please ensure that cold items are kept cold, held at 41 degrees or lower and hot foods are kept hot at 135 degrees or higher. Foods held at lukewarm temperatures between this range (41 to 135 degrees) are more likely to grow bacteria. If an item requires refrigeration, it is preferable to bring in an amount for only one meal or one serving so the item does not need to be stored. We are not permitted to refrigerate food brought in from home more than 2-3 days.
- If bringing in baked goods or cookies, please consider bringing the kind that do not require refrigeration, and avoid bringing items made with cream cheese, cream fillings or cream icing which require refrigeration.
- Baked goods should be sealed in a plastic container.
- Please check at the nurses' desk for assistance when re-heating items and if storage is needed in the nursing unit's refrigerator. All stored items must have the resident's name and the date the food was prepared indicated on them. Items not properly labeled or dated will be discarded. Also check with the nurse manager concerning the resident's diet to see if there are any food restrictions. Residents must be able to safely chew and swallow the items provided. If sharing food with a resident's roommate, please check with the nurse manager before doing so. Some residents may have allergies or other conditions which may limit the consumption of certain foods.

You can learn more about food safety at the USDA's web site—[www.FoodSafety.gov](http://www.FoodSafety.gov). Thank you for your assistance. If you have any questions, please contact our Food Service Department at (410)942-2107.

9/17, 12/21

Darrick DeBoard, Sr, CDM, CFPP / Sonal Patel, RDN, LDN, FAND



DR. THOMAS BIONDO

## Food Brought in by Families and Friends

### Policy

To help enhance quality of life, residents may have food brought in by families and friends and these items can be reheated and stored for a limited period of time. Please refer to the "Safe Handling of Foods from Home" guideline sheet for additional information.

### Procedure

Staff are trained on resident food storage policies to provide guidance to families and visitors for foods brought in from outside the facility.

A letter regarding safe handling of foods from home is included in each admission packet to help educate families (*letter follows*).

Families and visitors are encouraged to check at the nurses' desk prior to reheating food, storing food or offering foods to residents to ensure safety (regarding consistency issues, allergies/intolerances, restrictions when not followed which may cause harm such as fluid restrictions or NPO status and temperature issues.) Staff assist with reheating and storage. All items are labeled with the resident's name and date. Items requiring refrigeration are stored on the nursing unit in the refrigerators there. Refrigerated items are kept (with the exception of ice cream or other frozen item) for no more than three days. Items that are not open such as soda and containers of yogurt may be kept until expiration dates. Dry food items such as cookies and crackers may be kept in the resident's room in an enclosed tin or plastic container. These items should also be labeled and dated but may be kept longer than three days as long as they do not require refrigeration.

The facility reserves the right to temperature test foods and/or to reject any foods judged to be unsafe which may cause harm to the resident. This includes but is not limited to inappropriate consistencies, undercooked (non-pasteurized) eggs, raw milk and foods with visible soil.

Items brought in by families or visitors will not be served from or stored in the facility's food service kitchen (see below).

The facility will not be held liable for any ill effects or food related infections occurring from food/drinks brought from home for the residents.

Food Code states in 3-201.11(B):


*"FOOD prepared in a private home may not be used or offered for human consumption in a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT."*

The revised F 371 Sanitary Conditions Interpretive Guidance states, pg. 5:

*"Unsafe food sources - Unsafe food sources are sources not approved or considered satisfactory by Federal, State, or local authorities. Nursing homes are not permitted to use home-prepared or home-preserved (e.g., canned, pickled) foods for service to residents<sup>3</sup>. NOTE: Family members or other resident guests who bring in food for that resident's consumption are not subject to this prohibition"*

9/17, 12/21

Darrick DeBoard, Sr, CDM, CFPP / Sonal Patel, RDN, LDN, FAND

  
DR. THOMAS BIONDO