

Canadian Thanksgiving

Canada (October) · Second Monday in October



For recreation therapists and activity aides in Canadian long-term care and personal care homes. Print what you need. Leave the rest.

Large type. Short steps. Dementia-safe language. Canadian spelling. One click PDF. No login required for this preview.

Pictures for this week

Use these on a screen or print one page for the program table. They are calm on purpose.



Apples in a basket. Wikimedia Commons, Oxfordian Kissuth, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Maple leaves. Wikimedia Commons, Mabit1, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Canadian Thanksgiving (October)

A gentle harvest week for our home. Gratitude, warm food smells, and time together.

Staff briefing

Hello friend, and welcome to Thanksgiving week.

In Canada, Thanksgiving is in October. It is on the second Monday in October. It is not in November. That is the United States date.

Some residents may remember both dates from family or TV. That is normal. Gently repeat: our home celebrates on the October Monday.

Goals for the week:

- Keep groups small and calm.
- Offer comfort and belonging.
- Never quiz about memory. Invite, do not test.
- Watch for grief. Holidays can bring missing family to mind. Sit close. Listen.

What to say if asked about November: > We celebrate Thanksgiving here in October, with harvest time in Canada. In November we will have our Gentle Remembrance week instead.

Food notes:

- Check diets and swallowing plans before any tasting.
- Small portions only. Smell and touch count as much as taste.
- Keep hand wipes nearby.

Supplies in one bin:

- Faux leaves, small pumpkins and gourds, soft cloth napkins.
- Harvest bingo cards and caller chips.
- Battery tea lights. No real candles.
- Gratitude tree branches in a stable vase, paper leaves, markers.
- Blankets and cardigan basket by the door.

Seven-day gentle calendar

Keep each group to 20 to 30 minutes. Rest between groups. Offer room visits each day.

Monday: Welcome to Harvest

- Morning circle: Pass a small pumpkin. Name one comfort. Say: warm socks, hot tea, sunny window.
- Afternoon: Set up gratitude tree together. Hang two or three leaves each.
- Room visits: Deliver one paper leaf and marker. Offer to write for them.

Tuesday: Harvest Colours

- Morning: Sort faux leaves by colour. Red pile, yellow pile, orange pile.
- Afternoon: Simple leaf art. Glue large leaves on card stock. No small pieces.
- Evening: Warm apple juice or cider if diets allow. Smell cinnamon sticks.

Wednesday: Gratitude Circle

- Morning group, 15 minutes: See Group script below.

- Afternoon: Quiet music. Finish gratitude tree. Read a few leaves aloud with permission.
- Room visits: Read one leaf message one to one.

Thursday: Harvest Bingo

- Morning or afternoon, 25 minutes. Use caller list below.
- Prizes: warm socks, lip balm, large print word search, tea sachet.
- Everyone who plays gets applause and a sticker. No losers here.

Friday: Baking Smells

- Morning: No bake pumpkin spice playdough or oatmeal mixing in a bowl. Stir and smell.
- Afternoon: If kitchen approves, warm plain buns with cinnamon. Small tastes only.
- Room visits: Pass spice jars to smell. Nutmeg, cinnamon, vanilla.

Saturday: Family Visiting Day Support

- Set chairs in pairs for visitors.
- Gratitude tree on display in lounge.
- Have room cards ready for residents staying in.
- Evening: Soft harvest film or photo slides. Mute ads. Low volume.

Sunday and Holiday Monday: Thanksgiving Rest

- Short blessing or thank you moment before lunch. Keep it optional.
- See Group script closing for words to use.
- Afternoon: Gentle stroll or window watch. Name falling leaves.
- If Monday is the holiday: repeat gratitude circle in brief form. Ten minutes is plenty.

Group script

Use this for Wednesday, and in short form on Sunday or Monday. Sit in a circle. Speak slowly. Smile.

Welcome, 2 minutes: > Good morning everyone. Happy Thanksgiving week. Thank you for coming. We are glad you are here. My name is [your name]. We will share some thankful thoughts together. There is no right or wrong answer.

Grounding, 2 minutes: > Let us settle in. Feet flat. Hands in lap or holding a warm cloth. Take one soft breath in. And out. Good. Feel your chair holding you.

Pass and share, 8 minutes: Hold up a small pumpkin or soft ball.

> I will start. I am thankful for warm soup on a cold day. Now I will pass this to you. You can share a thank you, or just pass it on. Both are fine.

Tips:

- Go person by person. No skipping pressure.
- If someone is quiet, say: Thank you for being here with us. That counts too.
- If someone repeats, nod warmly. Repetition is welcome.
- If grief comes up, say: Thank you for telling us. We hear you. Offer tissue. Pause.

Harvest bingo caller option, for Thursday:

Read slowly. Hold up a picture card each time. Pause five seconds between calls.

Caller list, 24 calls:

1. Pumpkin
2. Apple
3. Corn
4. Wheat
5. Maple leaf
6. Barn
7. Tractor
8. Hay bale
9. Sunflower
10. Cranberry
11. Pie
12. Soup pot
13. Warm socks
14. Blanket
15. Candle glow, battery only
16. Goose
17. Harvest moon
18. Garden carrots
19. Potatoes
20. Pear
21. Cinnamon
22. Teapot
23. Family photo
24. Thank you card

Call like this: > Next one is apple. Red apple. Mark apple if you have it.

Check cards kindly. Say: Let us check together. No rush.

Closing blessing, 2 minutes, all groups: > Thank you for sharing this time. We are thankful for each person here. Wishing you comfort and warmth today. We will see you tomorrow.

Three room-bound cards

Print on card stock. Large print, 18 point or larger. One idea per card. Leave white space.

Card 1: Bedside Gratitude Leaf > Hello [Name]. Happy Thanksgiving week. > Step 1. Hold this soft leaf. > Step 2. Smell this cinnamon stick with me. > Step 3. Tell me one comfort you like. Warm tea? Soft blanket? Sunshine? > I can write it for you. We will hang it on our tree. > Thank you for being part of our home.

Staff note at bottom: Stay 10 minutes. Leave leaf copy at bedside if they wish.

Card 2: Window Harvest Watch > Hello [Name]. Let us watch fall together. > Step 1. Look out the window with me. > Step 2. Name one colour you see. > Step 3. Hold this small pumpkin. Feel how smooth it is. > Step 4. Sip water or juice together. > Nice to sit with you.

Staff note at bottom: Describe what you see if vision is low. Red leaves. Grey sky. Birds.

Card 3: Hand Squeeze and Smell > Hello [Name]. A quiet visit for you. > Step 1. Warm your hands with this cloth. I will warm mine too. > Step 2. Smell vanilla. Smell apple. Pick your favourite. > Step 3. Listen to one short song with me. > Thank you for your time today. Staff note at bottom: Watch for fatigue. End early with thanks if eyes close. That is fine.

Dementia-safe notes

- One step at a time. Say it, show it, do it together.
- Offer choices, not quizzes. Say: Would you like apple or pumpkin smell? Not: Do you remember what this is?
- Never correct the date or story. Join their feeling. If they say Thanksgiving is in November, say: Many people know that date from TV. Here we celebrate in October with harvest.
- Keep noise low. One voice at a time. Turn off TV during groups.
- Use real items to hold. Leaves, gourds, cloth. Avoid small choking pieces.
- Watch hands. Cinnamon and strong smells can irritate. Hold jar six inches away.
- Allow leaving and returning. Say: You are welcome any time.
- End with comfort. Hand on shoulder only if welcome. Use words: You did well today.
- Document mood change, appetite change, or sadness. Tell the nurse.
- French language tip: Have merci cards ready. Say merci beaucoup with a smile.

Print list

Print Friday before the week starts. Check ink.

For lounge:

- [] 12 large print harvest bingo cards, with pictures
- [] 1 caller list, this pack, laminated
- [] 40 paper leaves with string, plus 10 spare
- [] 1 gratitude tree sign: Our Home Is Thankful for You
- [] 5 table signs: Thanksgiving Week, October, Welcome

For rooms:

- [] 20 copies each of Room Card 1, 2, 3 on cream card stock
- [] 10 extra gratitude leaves with markers in a bag for room visits

For staff:

- [] 4 copies of this briefing, one per team
- [] 1 diet list from nursing for tastings
- [] 1 contact sheet: who to call for low mood or family questions

After the week: Save bingo cards and faux items in Harvest bin. File two photos of tree, no faces without consent. Note what worked for next October.

How to use this PDF

Print the cover in colour if you can. Print the rest in black and white. Leave room cards at the bedside. You do not need to run every program.