

5 November 2020

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Advice to Residential Aged Care Facilities

Key points

- Exclude staff and visitors who:
 - Have a fever or symptoms of COVID-19
 - Have in the last 14 days been identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case,
 - Have in the last 14 days been in any of the locations on the [self-isolate and get tested immediately](#) list, at the times and dates listed,
 - Have in the last 14 days been in any of the locations on the [monitor for symptoms](#) list, at the times and dates listed except where noted otherwise on the webpage,
 - Have in the last 14 days been in Victoria (apart from the Victorian [border region](#)).
- Plan for all staff to wear surgical masks should it be recommended in the future because of an increased risk of local transmission.
- Monitor the [NSW COVID-19 Website](#) for regular updates of venues where confirmed COVID-19 cases have recently attended.

Dear Residential Aged Care Facility Director

All residential aged care facilities must maintain vigilance to prevent the introduction of COVID-19. This is because COVID-19 is still circulating in some areas of Sydney. There remains a risk that, in the future, an outbreak could also occur in other parts of NSW. If an outbreak was to occur in your area, your facility will need to be able to rapidly implement additional protections, including wearing of masks by all staff and visitors until the risk recedes.

Visiting

All residential aged care facilities in NSW should support visits for residents, unless they are experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak, or in a situation where restriction of access is required (see below). Allowing visits while maintaining appropriate screening and infection prevention measures improves the health and wellbeing of your residents. Please note that extra precautions may be required for some visitors – as detailed below.

Visitor access should be in line with the screening requirements set out in the [Public Health \(COVID-19 Aged Care Facilities\) Order \(No 3\) 2020](#), and the guidance outlined in the [Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19](#) and [the CDNA National Guidelines for the prevention, control and public health management of COVID-19 outbreaks in residential care facilities in Australia](#).

Facilities are asked to:

- Record **every** visitor's name and contact details, electronically where possible
- **Ensure** children are closely supervised
- Ask visitors to undertake [hand hygiene](#) on entering and leaving the facility, and on entering and leaving the resident's room (or designated visiting area)
- **Encourage visitors to remain within the resident's room**, or go to a designated outdoor area or alternative room where the resident and their visitors can keep apart from other residents
- Allow no more than **two visitors** per resident at a time – this does not mean only the same two people can ever visit a resident.

Situations where extra precautions are needed

Visitors who have been in the last 14 days:

- in an [area with increased testing](#) or

- to large shopping centre listed on the [monitor for symptoms web page](#) marked as “not excluded from visiting a residential aged care facility or residential disability care facility”

must wear masks while in the facility and be escorted by facility staff when going to and from a resident’s room (or designated visiting area).

Facilities located in [area with increased testing](#) may accept visitors, however extra precautions are required. Facilities must ensure that visitors wear a mask while in the facility and are escorted by facility staff when going to and from the resident’s room (or designated visiting area).

As of 4th November 2020, the [areas with increased testing](#) are: [Camden LGA](#) and [Liverpool LGA](#)..

Situations that Require Restriction of Access:

Exclude any staff or visitors who:

- have a fever (37.5°C or higher) or any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection, even if mild. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, headache, fatigue, runny nose, sore throat, shortness of breath, and loss of taste or loss of smell. Other reported symptoms of COVID-19 include muscle pain, joint pain, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting and loss of appetite.
- During the last 14 days;
 - have been identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case.
 - have been in any of the locations listed on the [self-isolate and get tested immediately](#) page, at the times and dates listed.
 - have been in any of the locations listed on the [monitor for symptoms](#) page, at the times and dates listed, except where noted otherwise on the web page **or**
 - have been in Victoria (apart from the Victorian [border region](#))

Additional Advice for Staff and Facilities

Additional COVID-19 measures for staff and facilities

- Minimise staff working across different care facilities. Where ceasing staff movement across facilities is not practical, additional measures should be put in place, such as maintaining records of staff and work locations.
- Advice on masks:
 - All staff who in the last 14 days have:
 - worked, lived in, or visited [areas with increased testing, or](#)
 - visited a large shopping centre listed on the [monitor for symptoms web page](#) marked as “not excluded from visiting a residential aged care facility or residential disability care facility”

should wear surgical masks when in the facility, including when caring for residents and where physical distancing (1.5m) from other people cannot be maintained. Masks should also be worn while on breaks where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
 - All facilities should plan for all staff to wear surgical masks should it be recommended in the future because of an increased risk of local transmission. Your Public Health Unit (PHU) will notify you of this requirement should your location be affected.
- Designate an infection control lead at your facility and ensure all staff are well trained.
- Keep your preparedness plans up to date. Ensure sufficient stocks of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** are held on site.

Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, it may be possible for excluded visitors to be allowed entry into the facility on compassionate grounds (e.g. imminent death of a loved one.) Similar provisions exist for staff members if their exclusion will result in significant compromise to patient care.

This decision must be based on an assessment of the risk of the individual, and ability of the facility to manage their visit. Visitors and staff with symptoms, or who have been identified as close contacts, should not be exempted. Advice should be sought from your local Public Health Unit as to how to appropriately manage these visits.

Community Activities and Outings - Individual and Group Excursions

- Residents can leave the facility to attend small family gatherings and group excursions as outlined in the [Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19](#).
- Outings should be planned to take place outdoors as much as possible. If planning a visit to an indoor location, choose venues that are well-ventilated and not crowded.
- Avoid planning outings to [areas with increased testing](#).
- Residents should wear face masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained, including on shared transport, where possible.
- For all excursions, facilities should maintain a record of the visit location, number of people in the gathering and the date of the visit.
- There is no requirement for COVID-19 testing or self-isolation for residents on return to the facility from an outing, unless they develop [signs or symptoms of COVID-19](#).

If you need additional public health advice contact your local NSW Health Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Kerry Chant PSM
Chief Health Officer, NSW Health

In-Text Hyperlinks and Additional Resources

Up to date information about COVID-19 can be found at:

Latest Case Locations:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates#latest-covid-19-case-locations-in-nsw>

- Areas with increased testing
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates#areas-with-increased-testing>
- Self-isolate and get tested immediately:
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates#self-isolate-and-get-tested-immediately-if-youve-been-to-these-locations>
- Monitor for symptoms
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates#monitor-for-symptoms-if-youve-been-to-these-locations>
- Victorian Border Region:
<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/border-zone-address-check>

Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/frequently-asked-questions.aspx#1-4>

Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) Infection Control Guidelines

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/cdna-national-guidelines-for-the-prevention-control-and-public-health-management-of-covid-19-outbreaks-in-residential-care-facilities-in-australia>

Clinical Excellence Commission Infection Control Guidelines

https://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/601241/COVID-19-IPC-Guidance-for-Visiting-Patients-in-HCFs.pdf

Hand Hygiene

<https://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/keep-patients-safe/infection-prevention-and-control/healthcare-associated-infections/hand-hygiene>

Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/industry-code-for-visiting-residential-aged-care-homes-during-covid-19>