

Is my loved one's aged care service ready for a COVID-19 outbreak?

Questions family and friends can ask their aged care service provider

6 October 2022

Aged care services are required to take steps to prevent, prepare for and reduce the impact of a COVID-19 outbreak.

You have the right to ask your provider what they are doing to keep residents safe.

This fact sheet includes some suggested questions you can ask your residential aged care provider about their readiness for a COVID-19 outbreak.

We've also included links to resources available from a number of different sources to assist you with understanding your loved one's right to feel safe, informed and connected during the pandemic.

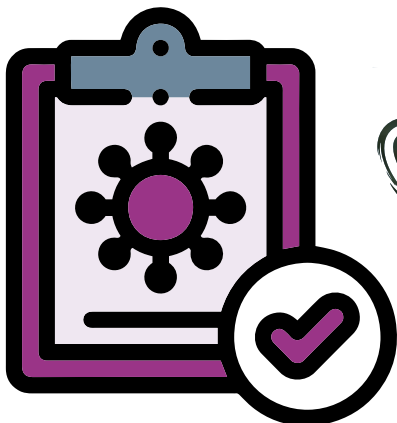
The information may also help you to understand the actions your provider is taking, and how you might be involved.

General COVID-19 information

- **Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission:**
[COVID-19 consumer resources](#)
- **Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care:**
[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for people in residential aged care facilities and visitors](#)
[COVID-19 oral treatments – Information for residents and their families in residential aged care facilities](#)
- **Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN):**
[COVID-19 information](#)
- **Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia:**
[COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) information](#)
- **Dementia Australia:**
[The latest COVID-19 Dementia Australia resources](#)

Other contacts:

- COVID-19 Aged Care Bereavement Support:
Call 1800 222 200 or
email covidagedcare@grief.org.au



How to share concerns

Commission

If you are not happy with how your provider is preparing for or properly managing a COVID-19 outbreak, including visitation rights, you can raise your concerns with the Commission by contacting 1800 951 822 or by using our [Online Complaints Form](#).

Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN)

For information on COVID and your aged care rights, and for advocacy support discussing concerns with your provider:
phone 1800 700 600
8am-8pm Mon-Fri | 10am-4pm Sat
www.opan.org.au





Questions you can ask your provider

Q

Do you have an outbreak management plan ready?

- How does the plan ensure the rights of all residents are respected?
- Do you regularly test and update your plan?
- How can residents and their families be involved in practising the plan?

Q

What impact will a COVID outbreak have on the care my loved one receives?

- Will residents still be able to do the things they like to do – inside and outside the facility?
- Will residents' doctors or other health professionals still be able to visit during an outbreak? If not, what other arrangements will you have in place?
- Will residents be able to attend regular medical appointments?
- If a resident has to leave the facility to attend a medical or other appointment, will they need to isolate when they return?
- What criteria do you use to send residents to hospital?



Q

What are your arrangements for visitors and what changes might occur during an outbreak?

- How do you screen staff and visitors before they enter the service?
- Are screening tests and PPE (such as masks, gowns and gloves) provided for staff and visitors?
- If an outbreak occurs, what is your policy about visitors?
- What advance arrangements do you have in place for people deemed Essential Visitors (as per the Industry Code for Visiting in Aged Care) to visit residents during an outbreak?
- Are visits on compassionate grounds allowed during an outbreak e.g. will I be able to visit if my family member/ friend is close to the end of life or they are highly distressed and unable to settle?
- How will you ensure family and friends are able to stay connected to residents if not everyone is able to visit?
- What support is available if I arrange for my family member to come home to be cared for?
- When an outbreak is over, what steps do I need to take for their return to the facility?

Key resources

- [COVID-19 restrictions in residential aged care – your rights](#)
- [Partnerships in care: Supporting older people’s wellbeing in residential care](#)
- [Industry Code for Visiting in Aged Care](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Information for Permanent Aged Care Residents – Emergency Leave](#)



Q

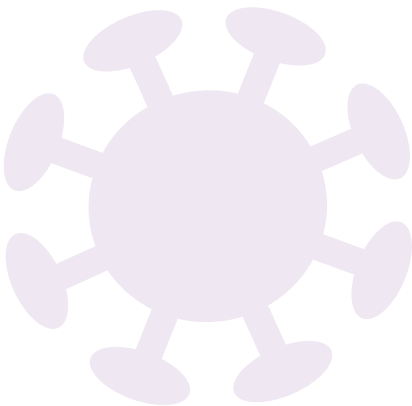
How are you ensuring appropriate infection prevention and control?

- What precautions are being taken when a nurse or care worker provides personal care for residents?
- How will you protect residents from COVID-positive residents located near them or sharing their room and bathroom during an outbreak?
- How are staff trained to make sure the care they provide to residents in an outbreak is safe?
- How often do you test residents and staff for COVID-19?
- Am I required to wear a mask when visiting?
- What are the arrangements for cleaning during an outbreak?

Q

How can vaccinations be arranged if a resident needs one?

- When is my family member eligible for their next vaccination or booster shot and how can you arrange for this to happen?
- What are you doing to discuss and answer questions about vaccination with individual residents and their family members?
- When can my family member or I discuss questions about vaccination with the doctor or staff?



Q

Do you have processes in place to access antiviral medications if needed?

- Can we give advanced consent?
- What arrangements are in place for a GP to prescribe medications if needed?
- What arrangements are in place with local pharmacies to access medication quickly?

Key resources

- [COVID-19 vaccination and antiviral treatments](#)
- [COVID-19 oral treatments information for residents and their families in residential aged care facilities](#)

Q

Will residents need to move rooms or be restricted to their rooms in an outbreak?

- In what circumstances would a resident be required to stay in their room? Do you have a plan to make this as short a time as possible?
- Will they need to change rooms if there is an outbreak?
- How will you manage residents in shared rooms with a shared bathroom?





Q

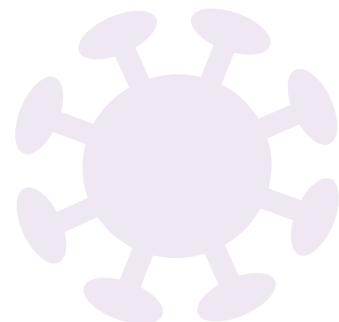
How will you get additional staff if needed?

- How will you ensure that any new staff coming into the facility understand each resident's needs? What training will they receive?
- Do you have plans to have staff who are required to isolate perform work from home? Would these staff members check in with residents online?
- What happens if a central services area (such as a kitchen) needs to close?

Q

How will you keep staff, residents and families informed in an outbreak?

- How will I know whether or not my family member has COVID during an outbreak?
- If a resident has dementia, how will you ensure they understand what's happening at this time?
- How will you keep me updated about the wellbeing of my family member, the status of the facility and its response to COVID-19?
- Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns?
- Are the contact details you have for me and my family member up to date?



Q

How will you ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of residents is maintained during an outbreak?

- How will you make sure that each resident receives medication on time and they are given regular drinks of water and meals at the right time?
- How will you help residents maintain face-to-face contact or stay in touch with family and friends if that's not possible?
- What interesting/fun activities will you introduce if face-to-face contact with family and friends is not possible?
- What physical activities will you introduce to keep residents active?
- Can residents access free counselling services?
- Will residents continue to receive allied health supports eg physiotherapy/occupational therapy to maintain mobility and physical wellness?

Key resources

- [Examples of innovations](#) providers have shared to ensure the ongoing health, wellbeing and safety of consumers in their care
- [Connecting over the phone or video call – Activities for children and their elderly relatives](#)
- [How do I stay active and enjoy myself during COVID-19?](#)

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.



Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
GPO Box 9819, In Your Capital City