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Media Release

Managing COVID-19 outbreaks in aged care

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner, Janet Anderson, has written to all aged care providers today to highlight steps they must take to continue to protect people in their care during a COVID-19 outbreak.

“Thorough preparation and ongoing vigilance are key to managing the risks that COVID-19 presents in aged care settings,” Ms Anderson said.

“The resilience and sustained attention to detail that aged care providers have demonstrated over the last two years will continue to serve people in aged care well, as the next wave of the coronavirus moves across the country and enters more aged care settings.”

In her letter to providers, Ms Anderson has emphasised the role of vaccinations and antiviral treatments in protecting older Australians and saving lives.

“Up-to-date vaccination for both aged care residents and staff provides the best protection against COVID-19 but it is not a perfect shield against infection,” Ms Anderson said.

“For this reason, antiviral therapies should be an early consideration for adults in high-risk groups – including aged care residents - who test positive to the virus, irrespective of their vaccination status.”

Last week, the Commission released a **clinical alert** detailing the steps that aged care providers must immediately take to minimise the risks presented by COVID-19, including:

- maintaining and auditing infection prevention and control practices
- maintaining up to date information on residents’ vaccination status and eligibility dates, and ensuring timely scheduling of boosters
- paying close attention to screening and monitoring of staff and visitors
- regularly checking staff and residents for clinical symptoms of COVID-19 infection
- ensuring easy access to doctors for COVID-19 antiviral prescriptions, which are effective in reducing severe infection
- checking that local pharmacies have immediate supplies of antiviral medications
- confirming sufficient stock on hand of essential supplies including PPE and rapid antigen tests
- staying up to date with public health requirements and information in your state/territory.

These steps complement the advice for aged care providers outlined in the **Winter Plan – A guide for residential aged care providers**, recently released by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

COVID-related resources, and links to relevant information and education for providers are available on the Commission’s website. The Commission is monitoring services’ compliance with infection control arrangements and the appropriate use of antiviral medications for any aged care residents who contract COVID-19. Additional targeted education and monitoring is being provided to support higher risk residential services and those experiencing an outbreak.

“A slow or ineffective response to an outbreak places both residents and staff at increased risk of harm and is likely to result in regulatory action by the Commission,” Ms Anderson said.

The letter sent to residential aged care providers is published on the Commission’s website [here](#).

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