



Partnerships in care

Caring together

Partner information package for family and friends
of those in residential aged care



Australian Government
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Engage
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Safeguard



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What is a Partnerships in care program?

A Partnerships in care program takes a person-centred approach to promoting existing relationships of care between a resident and their family members or close friends.

Becoming a partner in care (also referred to as a partner) will help you to continue to provide care and companionship to the person you already support in an aged care home, even during periods of outbreak. This includes increasing your skills in infection prevention and control and formalising your care arrangements with the aged care home.

Partnerships in care build on recent public health advice relating to access for visitors to aged care residents including the [Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes During COVID-19](#) and the [Interim Guidance on Managing Public Health Restrictions on Residential Aged Care Facilities](#).

There are many different types of visitor arrangements, including specific arrangements during an outbreak. It is the right of the resident to maintain at least one visitor, even in an outbreak.

Who is a partner in care?

A partner in care is a person identified by an aged care resident, or their representative, who they have a close and continuing relationship with, such as a family member or close friend.

The type of support you provide as a partner in care will depend on your relationship and the needs of the person you care for. It may include activities such as:

- helping with dressing
- sharing stories, food or other pastimes
- helping to practise exercise routines
- helping to visit places of special interest.

Importantly, participation in a Partnerships in care (PiC) program can only happen with agreement from the aged care resident or their representative.

It is important to remember that the type of support a partner can offer may change if the aged care home is in an outbreak or subject to public health orders. If there is a COVID-19 exposure or outbreak, the aged care home will implement their outbreak management plan. During this time, it may take a few days for partners to be allowed onsite. However, access should be facilitated as quickly as possible to ensure the person you care for, and all residents, have ongoing access to visitation.



Why should I join a Partnerships in care program?

Joining a PiC program will help the person you care for:

- be supported with their daily routine
- improve their wellbeing
- reduce feelings of loneliness.

Joining a PiC program will also help you to:

- be there for your family or close friend when they need you most
- reduce negative health impacts and social isolation for the person you care for
- learn or improve your knowledge and skills around infection control practices and other processes that will allow you to visit the person you care for as safely as possible and keep other residents safe.

What is this information package for?

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has developed resources to help family and close friends maintain social engagement and important relationships of care with people living in aged care, even during outbreaks.

This information package will build your skills in preventing the spread of infection. There are risks of infection any time you visit an aged care home, but as a partner you may be visiting during an outbreak or when the person you are caring for is COVID positive. We want to help you prepare, understand and manage the risks for you and others.

While this partner information package is tailored for formal partners in care, the content is useful for all visitors to an aged care home.

The Commission's fact sheet [Ensuring safe visitor access to residential aged care](#) contains more information about the different types of visitors to an aged care home and the obligations of residential aged care providers to ensure safe visitor access.

What is included in this information package?

This package has information about:

- keeping you and the person you care for safe
- hand hygiene
- wearing a mask
- reducing the spread of infection during an outbreak
- visiting an aged care home during an outbreak.

When you have reviewed all the information and watched the video resources, complete the declaration on the last page and talk to the aged care home about any requirements that are specific to their PiC program.

It is important to remember that while the aged care home will have procedures in place to minimise risks from infections such as visitor symptom screening, ensuring all staff are vaccinated and trained in infection prevention and using personal protective equipment (PPE), you will also need to play an active part in minimising risks from infection when entering the aged care home.

You should therefore regularly review this information package as it is essential to keep your knowledge up-to-date when it comes to infection control.



Keeping you and the person you care for safe

When visiting an aged care home, you should be aware of the following actions for every visit to minimise the risk of infectious viruses, and keep yourself, the person you are caring for and others safe.

The actions you take in an outbreak will be different as there are extra precautions which must be taken. This information package contains a checklist for you to use if you are visiting an aged care home during an outbreak.

Actions to keep safe...

Before you visit an aged care home

- Stay at home if unwell.
- Be aware of the aged care home's visiting arrangements.
- Stay informed of vaccination requirements for visiting (for example COVID-19 and flu vaccination certificates) and keep your vaccination record up-to-date.

During your visit



Clean your hands

Why? Germs can be spread by contact. This is when an infectious person touches another person or an object, and another person touches the same area.



Cough or sneeze into your elbow or tissue

Why? Viruses can spread when an infectious person coughs or sneezes and droplets or aerosols spread through the air. Remember to always clean your hands after using a tissue.



During your visit



Wear a mask

Why? Wearing masks, and other personal protective equipment (PPE), helps reduce the risk of you or someone else breathing in or spreading infected particles when talking, coughing or sneezing.



Keep your distance (1.5m) when you can

Why? People in close contact are at high risk of breathing in infected droplets or aerosols from an infected person. You must keep 1.5m distance in shared spaces, but for the person you provide care and companionship for, there is no need to maintain social distancing.



Open a window

Why? Opening a window, when possible, can act as a natural ventilation for any infectious particles in the air. Check with staff before you open a window.

After your visit

Call the aged care home manager if you:

- become unwell as you may have been infectious during your visit
- have any questions.

Did you know?

- These actions can reduce the spread of infections, including the viruses that cause gastro, the flu and COVID-19.
- Anyone can be sick and not know they are sick. Sometimes the source of the infection is unknown.

Remember:

- It's important to follow all guidelines and requirements provided by the aged care home. Talk to the aged care home for more information about their requirements.



For more information about keeping safe with COVID-19, view the video by scanning the QR code on the left or type the following link into your browser:

<https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/how-stay-safe-covid-19-videos>



Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is about cleaning your hands. It is an important part of how you protect yourself from getting sick and it helps to keep you and the person you care for safe. We need to clean our hands when we go into an aged care home to prevent any germs from spreading.

There are 2 ways to clean your hands:

- sanitiser; and
- handwashing.

When do I clean my hands with sanitiser?

You need to clean your hands with sanitiser:

- when you enter or exit an aged care home
- before you enter a resident's room
- after you touch the front door buzzer, door handles or rails on stairs and any other commonly touched items
- after you leave a resident's room.



To view the video about how to clean your hands with sanitiser, scan the QR Code on the left or type the following link into your browser:

<https://youtu.be/MXLeO3hF4Yg>

When should I wash my hands?

You need to wash your hands with soap and water:

- if you have touched something that looks unclean
- after you go to the toilet.



To view the video about how to wash your hands with soap and water, scan the QR Code on the left or type the following link into your browser:

<https://youtu.be/ZtvuO6iTf8w>



How do I clean my hands using sanitiser?



1. Apply sanitiser

- Pump sanitiser 1 or 2 times onto your hands.
- Make sure there is enough sanitiser to cover your hands.



2. Rub your hands together

- Bring the palms of your hands together.
- Rub in the sanitiser palm to palm.



3. Rub the back of your hands

- Put the palm of one hand on top of the back of your other hand.
- Lace your fingers together and rub up and down.
- Do this on the other side.



4. Interlace your fingers

- Put your hands palm to palm.
- Lace your fingers together and rub up and down.



5. Rub the back of your fingers

- Curl up your fingers of one hand and rub into your other palm using a circular motion.
- Do this on the other side.



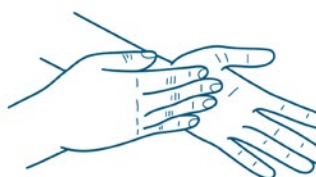
6. Rub each thumb

- Rub your thumb with the palm of your other hand up and down.
- Do this on the other side.



7. Rub your palms with your fingertips

- Rub your fingertips of one hand into the palm of your other hand in a circular motion.
- Do this on the other side.



8. Rub sanitiser into your wrists on each hand



9. Wait for the sanitiser to air dry.

- Do not use a towel to dry your hands.



How do I clean my hands using soap and water?



1. Wet your hands

- Turn on the tap and wet your hands.
- Keep the tap running while you complete all of the steps but do not rinse your hands until the end.



2. Apply Soap

- Rub your palms together.
- Make sure you use enough soap.
- You should get a lather when you rub your hands together.



3. Rub the back of your hands

- Put the palm of one hand on top of the back of your other hand.
- Lace your fingers together and rub up and down.
- Do this on the other side.



4. Interlace your fingers

- Put your hands palm to palm.
- Lace your fingers together and rub up and down.



5. Rub the back of your fingers

- Curl up your fingers of one hand and rub into your other palm in a circular motion.
- Do this on the other side.



6. Rub each thumb

- Rub your thumb with the palm of your other hand up and down.
- Do this on the other side.



7. Rub your palms with your fingertips

- Rub your fingertips of one hand into the palm of your other hand in a circular motion.
- Do this on the other side.



8. Rinse your hands

- Put your hands under the water and get all the soap off.
- Use your elbow to turn the tap off, DO NOT USE YOUR HANDS.



9. Dry your hands

- Use a clean paper towel to dry your hands.
- Do not use cloth towels.

When you are finished cleaning your hands, do not touch the sink, tap or bin otherwise you will need to clean your hands again.



Wearing a mask

Why do I need to wear a mask?

Wearing a mask is an important part of how you protect yourself from getting sick. It also helps to keep the person you care for safe. In the community, you might have been wearing a cloth mask or surgical mask. Some other masks are known as respirators.

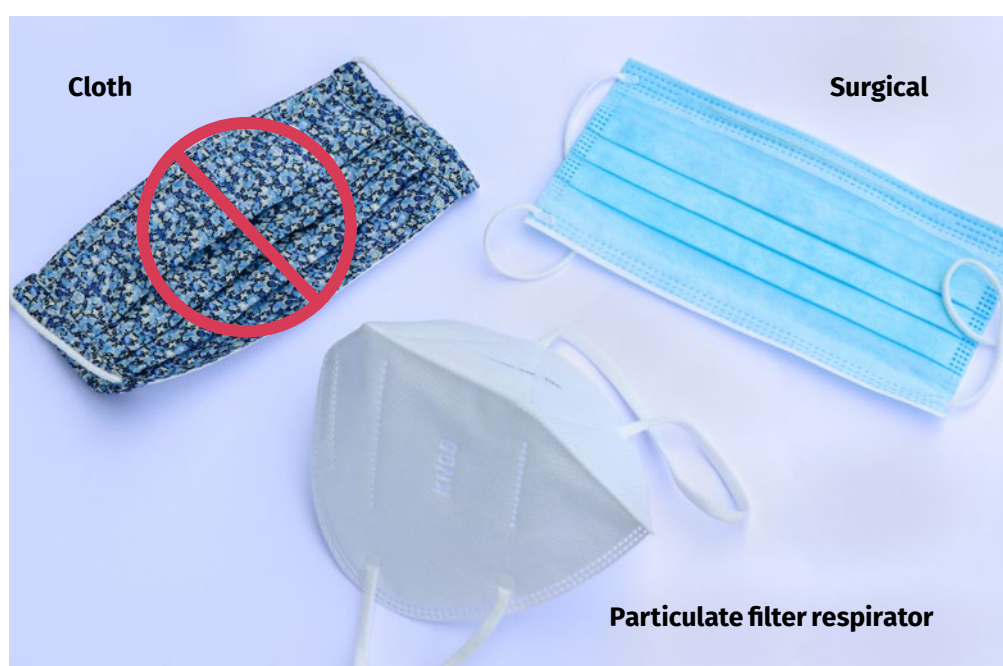
You need to wear an appropriate mask in aged care homes to prevent the spread of germs including viruses that cause colds, flu and COVID-19. People can spread infections even if they do not have symptoms.

Which mask should I wear?

To protect yourself and others, you should wear a surgical mask or particulate filter respirator (also known as a PFR, P2 or N95 mask). Cloth masks are not as effective and not suitable for use in an aged care home.

Your mask should be fitted and cover both your nose and mouth.

It is recommended that you are clean shaven (or close shaven) as evidence shows beards can make it difficult to achieve an adequate seal over your nose and mouth from a mask. An inadequate seal may put people at an increased risk of the spread of infection.



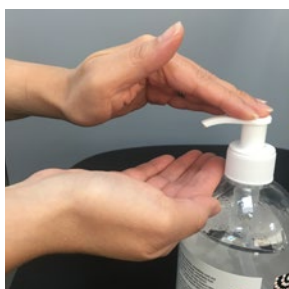


How often should I change my mask?

Surgical, P2 and N95 masks are NOT reusable. You need to wear a new mask each time you visit the aged care home. Your mask will then last up to 4 hours unless it becomes wet or damaged. If your mask gets wet or is damaged you must change it immediately.

Masks are single use only; this means after removing they should be thrown away into a bin. In an outbreak, used masks should be discarded into a special waste bin. The staff will support you with this. You should sanitise your hands as soon as you dispose of your mask.

How do I put my surgical mask on?



Step 1. Clean your hands with sanitiser.



Step 2. Hold the mask by its tapes or loops, then tie the mask around your head or put the loops around your ears.



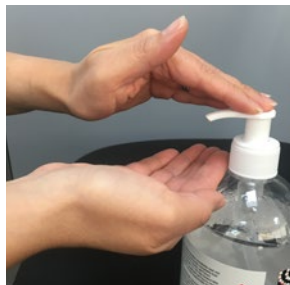
Step 3. Make sure the mask covers your mouth and nose, and that there are no gaps between your face and the mask, and press the nose piece around your nose.



Step 4. Do not touch the front of the mask while wearing it.



How do I put my P2 or N95 mask on?



Step 1. Clean your hands with sanitiser.



Step 2. Open the mask up reverse side up. Open the panels and loosen straps. There is a metallic strip at the top of the mask. This is the nose piece. Bend it slightly into a beak shape.



Step 3. Hold the mask with your hands on the outside in a cup-shape with the straps around your fingers.



Step 4. Position the mask against your face under your chin and with the nose piece across the bridge of your nose.



Step 5. With one hand on the outside of your mask pull the bottom strap over your head. Position the strap around the back of your neck and below your ears.



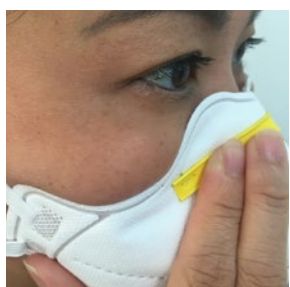
Step 6. Pull the top strap over your head and rest it high on the top of your head.



Step 7. Adjust the straps. Straps must not be twisted.



Step 8. Adjust the mask at the cheek and the chin.



Step 9. Always use two hands to “fit” and mould the nose clip to the shape of your nose bridge by pushing the metal clip inwards toward your face.



Step 10. Move your fingers down the metal on both sides of the nose.



Step 11. Make sure facial hair, hair and earrings are not in the mask.



Step 12. Press down on face, cheeks and nose.



How do I to check my P2 or N95 mask fits me?



Step 1. Gently place your hands around the edge of the mask.



Step 2. Take a deep breath and hold for a few seconds to make sure the mask collapses inward.



Step 3. Breathe out, make sure the mask bulges outwards and feel to see if there is any air escaping.

It is important that your mask fits you properly, so it can prevent viruses from entering as you breathe in. To check your mask fits:

- gently place your hands around the edge of the mask
- take a deep breath and hold for a few seconds to make sure the mask collapses inward
- breathe out, make sure the mask bulges outwards and feel to see if there is any air escaping
- if the air leaks out of the mask sides. Reposition the mask, tighten the metallic strap and reposition the elastic
- if the air leaks around the nose. Reposition the nose strap until there is a tight seal.

If you are not able to adjust your mask, ask someone at the aged care home to help you. This may include checking the straps and checking if there is anything (for example, earrings and/or hair) caught in the seal.

If you need to adjust your mask as you check the fit, you should check the fit again once the mask has been adjusted. If you are still unable to get a good fit try another type of mask. Our faces are all different in shape and some masks fit better than others.



Reducing the spread of infection during an outbreak

There are risks of infection any time you visit an aged care home, and as a partner there may be added risks if you visit during an outbreak or when the person you care for is COVID positive. When visiting an aged care home during an outbreak of an infectious virus such as COVID-19, there are extra actions you need to take to help slow and stop infections spreading, to manage the risks for you and others and to keep everyone safe.

It is important to remember that visitor and infection control policies in the aged care home may change quickly and regularly depending on the risks at any point in time. Be prepared and aware of possible changes, so you're ready if there is an outbreak.



Visiting requirements

As a partner in care, every effort will be made to ensure you can continue to visit the person you care for.

Before you visit, make sure you meet all requirements of the aged care home. These can include:

- vaccination requirements (for example COVID-19 and flu vaccination certificates)
- rapid antigen test (RAT) or other testing requirements, as directed. You'll need to follow the manufacturer's instructions for guidance on administering RATs
- completion of all partner in care training.

Visits to an aged care home during an outbreak should be coordinated with the aged care home to make sure they are prepared for your visit. This will include making sure there is available PPE and support for you. On your first visit during an outbreak, there may also be an orientation where the staff show you what areas you can and cannot enter and help ensure you are using PPE correctly and safely.

Remember: If unwell, stay at home and get tested as required.



Remember hand hygiene

You must keep your hands clean. Consider:

- are you using the right technique?
- are you cleaning your hands when required? For example, after leaving the room of the person you care for.



Be aware of those around you

Are you thinking about those around you? Remember to:

- allow 1.5m distance between others when possible
- be aware of restrictions about the number of people who can be inside a particular area.

The home will be divided up into different zones according to risk. Be aware of where you can and can't go in the home and obey the rules.



Wear required PPE

Personal protective equipment or PPE includes masks, gowns, gloves and eye protection.

The aged care home may ask you to wear PPE to reduce the risk of catching infection and passing on germs.

In an outbreak, masks with a higher level of protection must be worn; these are called P2 or N95 masks. When removing your mask you need to dispose of it appropriately and sanitise your hands.

You may be asked to wear additional PPE on your visit when:

- awaiting a COVID-19 test result for the person you care for who is unwell
- the person you care for is a high-risk contact and it is possible they may have an infection
- there is a COVID-19 outbreak at the aged care home.

In an outbreak, this may include wearing:

- eyewear protection such as safety glasses, goggles or face shields (remember: prescription eyewear will not provide adequate protection)
- gowns
- gloves.



Follow all directions

It's important you follow all directions from the aged care home, including access and movement within the building.

In the case of an outbreak, your movement will be limited to specific areas, known as zones, within the aged care home. This may involve:

- your access being restricted to certain zones
- the need to change PPE if you cross a zone. This may include when you need to use the bathroom.

Partner in care visiting times and arrangements are made by agreement and during an outbreak they may be different hours and arrangements. To keep you and the person you care for safe, your visit may be limited to their room, depending on the level of risk.



Other changes

Other changes that you may notice in an outbreak include the following:

Increased cleaning

Common surfaces, such as bedrails, light switches and handrails, and bedrooms may be cleaned more regularly.

Changes to food

Food may be prepared in a different place and the person you care for may need to eat in their room.

Increased monitoring

There may be increased monitoring of the health and wellbeing of all residents. This may include regularly checking their temperature, breathing and looking for other changes in their condition and how they feel.

Staff

Different or new staff may temporarily assist with care and support services. This may be because the usual staff are isolating at home. When this occurs there may be more individual care for the person you care for if they have particular needs.

Please understand that the changes are designed to protect residents and staff. They will be temporary.



Keep yourself and others safe

Think about how you can continue to visit the person you care for while also keeping yourself safe. Consider the actions you can take to help stop infections spreading to others. The following checklist for visiting an aged care home in an outbreak provides guidance about the steps you can take to manage the risks for you and others.

Support available:

Contact the aged care home manager if you have any questions.

If you need further support for yourself or your family, call the Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line on **1800 171 866** (available Mon to Fri, except public holidays, from 8.30am to 6pm).



Checklist: Visiting an aged care home during an outbreak

This checklist describes the practical steps you can take to manage the risks for you and others when visiting an aged care home during an outbreak.

Before your visit

| What? | Why? |
|---|--|
| Hand hygiene – be confident and practice cleaning your hands with sanitiser or soap and water. | Performing hand hygiene properly is very important to protect you from germs and from spreading germs to others. |
| Discuss with the aged care home the timing for your first visit. | Staff will be on hand to provide you with an orientation to the aged care home, explaining what areas you can access. They will also explain what PPE you need to use, help you take it on and off and answer any questions. |
| Understand that your visit will be limited to a specific area of the aged care home, such as the room of the person you care for. | This will reduce the risk of infection spreading through the aged care home. |
| Check with staff what PPE you will need to use. If you have not worn PPE before it can take time to get used to it so you might want to schedule a shorter visit. | PPE will help reduce the risk of catching infection and passing on germs. |
| Make sure your COVID-19 and influenza vaccination is up to date and you can show your vaccination documents at the door. | Vaccination is an important way to protect yourself from catching infection. |



On the day of the visit: Before you leave your house

| What? | Why? |
|--|--|
| Cancel your visit if you are feeling unwell or have symptoms such as coughing or sneezing. | Visiting the aged care home when you are unwell risks introducing further infections into the home. |
| Dress for comfort. Do not wear clothing that will be too hot or cold under the PPE. Avoid clothing that will dislodge or peel off when removing gowns (e.g. earrings). | Wearing PPE (such as gowns) can get hot and uncomfortable. It can also get caught on loose clothing or jewellery. |
| Prescription glasses can be prone to fogging when using PPE. | You can buy anti-fog wipes from a pharmacist or optometrist to reduce fogging. This will help improve your vision when wearing PPE. |
| Plan to only bring essential items into the aged care home. If you usually wear jewellery such as earrings or watches, consider leaving them at home. You will not be able to use personal drink bottles while in the resident's room. | Items brought into an aged care home during an outbreak cannot leave the area again unless they have been cleaned and disinfected. Some items such as food or books that you bring in for the resident will be left with them. However, this may not be suitable for other items. If you usually carry a handbag, check with staff whether you will be allowed to bring it into the resident's area. This may not be possible due to infection risk. If you plan to bring phones, tablets or laptops into the resident's room and want to take them with you at the end of the visit, check with the staff first that this is allowed and that they can help you with cleaning and disinfection at the start and end of the visit. |
| Plan to have something to eat and drink before you leave home. | You cannot eat or drink safely without removing masks once you are in the resident's room. |
| Plan to bring food or snacks that the person you are caring for can have safely. | While you cannot share this food with them, they can eat it comfortably and safely during your visit. |
| Take a toilet break prior to the start of the visit. | You will not be able to use the resident's bathroom during the visit. You may be able to use another bathroom in the aged care home, but you will need to remove all your PPE and put new PPE on if you do so. |



On the day of the visit: Visiting the person you care for

| What? | Why? |
|---|---|
| <p>Answer any questions on symptoms and travel on entry.</p> <p>Show your vaccination documents at the door. Staff will also advise if you need to complete a rapid antigen test (RAT).</p> | <p>This is part of the aged care home's procedures to minimise new infection being brought into the home.</p> |
| <p>Staff at the aged care home will support you and provide advice on infection control and PPE. It takes a lot of practice and experience to be able to don (put on PPE) and doff (remove PPE) safely. Staff will be on hand to provide you with advice to keep you and the environment safe.</p> | <p>Infection control and using PPE may be new to you. To be safe, staff will be on hand to help you and show you what to do before you enter the resident's room. You will get help with donning and doffing as you need it.</p> |
| <p>Tips on wearing PPE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks can be tight and uncomfortable. Ask the staff to check that your mask is fitted correctly. Straps should not be wrinkled or folded. Mask edges should not be wrinkled, rolled or folded on your skin. • Moisturise facial skin prior to and after visiting. • Tie or pin hair back prior to putting on PPE. Do not reach up under face shield with gloved hands to move hair out of eyes. • To achieve a good seal with masks you should be clean or close-shaven. • Think about what items you may need before putting on PPE. Do not reach under PPE into pockets, bags or remove clothing layers while wearing PPE. | <p>Once you put on your PPE, the outer layers could become contaminated. You must not reach under your gown or mask for any reason as you risk infecting yourself.</p> <p>If you reach under your gown to pull your phone from your pocket, this is considered a breach and you risk infecting yourself and others.</p> |
| <p>Types of activities that you can share with the resident are likely to be changed with an outbreak.</p> <p>Tips on a safe visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you can sit next to them (you do not have to maintain 1.5m distance) • you can help with activities like brushing their hair, feeding • you should not kiss them (you should not remove your mask) • if using a laptop, only you should be touching the device (it should not be shared with both people touching it). | <p>Check with staff as to what activities are allowed safely.</p> |



On the day of the visit: At the end of your visit

| What? | Why? |
|--|--|
| When doffing (removing PPE) it is important to do it correctly and to put the PPE in the correct bins for infectious waste. Staff will be on hand to help you. | Doffing is the most complex part of PPE. It is important to do it correctly otherwise there is a risk that you will pass infection from your contaminated PPE to yourself. |
| If you have brought any items into the resident's room and want to take them back out again, these items will need to be carefully cleaned and disinfected. | Staff will need to help you with this. The aged care home will provide detergent wipes and alcohol wipes for you to clean and disinfect personal items. Care should be taken as some chemical products can damage electronic device screen surfaces. It may be necessary to check manufacturer instructions. |

On the day of the visit: When you get home

| What? | Why? |
|--|---|
| If you visit an aged care home during an outbreak, you should return directly home at the end of your visit and change out of the clothes you have been wearing. | To minimise risk of contaminating your home environment, you should wash your clothes. You can wash your clothes with your other laundry, using normal detergent and hot water cycle. |
| On return home, wash your hands with soap and water. | If you have performed hand hygiene with sanitiser multiple times on your visit, your hands may be sticky from the layers of sanitiser. |
| If there is any skin irritation from wearing mask, apply moisturiser and monitor. | Applying facial moisturiser before and after using PPE can help minimise skin irritation. |
| If you become unwell after your visit, let the aged care home manager know. | There is a chance that you may have been in the aged care home during your infectious period. It is important that the home is aware of this and takes appropriate measures to protect residents and staff. |

[Checklist developed with input from infection prevention experts at Victorian Department of Health](#)

Declaration

**Please complete and sign to confirm
that you have read all training materials.**

| | | |
|---|-----|----|
| Keeping you and the person you care for safe | Yes | No |
| Hand hygiene | Yes | No |
| Wearing a mask | Yes | No |
| Reducing the spread of infection during an outbreak | Yes | No |
| Visiting an aged care home during an outbreak | Yes | No |

Signed: _____ Date: _____



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.

Last updated 29 April 2022. Updated versions with new content may become available – check back on our website regularly to ensure you are accessing the current versions. If you would like to provide any feedback in relation to this resource, please email education@agedcarequality.gov.au.



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