

Information for aged care residents and families

Management of COVID-19 in residential aged care facilities

This fact sheet provides information for aged care residents and their families/carers about what to expect in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19.

What will happen if a resident tests positive to COVID-19 in an aged care facility?

If a resident tests positive to COVID-19 they will be transferred immediately to hospital by ambulance. This is a public health response to ensure the resident has access to appropriate medical care if needed, and to protect other residents and staff from exposure. The resident's family/substitute decision-maker will be notified immediately. If a resident has an Advance Care Directiveⁱ, and they are unable to make their own decisions, their health care wishes will be respected in the hospital setting. This should be discussed with the treating team.

Suspected COVID-19

The following process will commence if a resident, or residents, show signs or symptoms of COVID-19:

- > The resident will be isolated to their room and additional infection control measures will be implemented, including:
 - o Signs, sanitiser and personal protective equipment (PPE) placed outside the resident's door, which all people entering the resident's room will be required to use.
- > The case will be discussed with the GP and urgent domiciliary / local regional Local Health Network testing for COVID-19 will be arranged. Residents will not be transferred to hospital for testing unless they are clinically unstable.

Confirmed case(s) of COVID-19

- > If a resident is confirmed as testing positive to COVID-19 they will be transferred immediately to hospital by ambulance, and the resident's family/carers notified.
- > If a resident has an Advance Care Directiveⁱⁱ, this will accompany the resident to hospital.
- > Regular visitors and families/carers of other residents will be notified that a positive COVID-19 case has been confirmed.
- > Staff, residents and visitors movements will be restricted to their specific living or working areas of the facility, and signs placed at the facility's entrance.

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- > All non-essential visits and group activities will be cancelled and non-essential visitors will be restricted.
- > Cleaning of the facility including touch points and shared spaces will be increased.
- > SA Health will deploy a Public Health Rapid Response Team to provide on-site clinical and infection control support to the facility until there have been no new cases for 14 days.
- > Other residents and staff will be closely monitored for symptoms of COVID-19 and tested.
 - o Close contacts of staff and residents will be notified, required to self-isolate and be tested.
- > If there are more than two residents who test COVID-19 positive it will assumed all residents who develop COVID-19-like symptoms are positive and they will be transferred immediately to hospital for further management.
- > Specific staff will be assigned to care for symptomatic residents in isolation and staff movements will be restricted between areas of the facility.
- > Non-essential transfers of residents will be avoided. This does not include essential transfers such as emergency treatment or for specialist appointments; however, if a required consultation is to occur, consider the need and possibility of telehealth consults as a preferred option.

Can visits occur at this time?

- > All non-essential visitors to the facility will be restricted.
- > Visits for compassion reasons will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- > Details of visitors who do attend the facility for essential visits, for example end of life support, must be recorded on a visitor register and visitors must comply with the following guidance:
 - o report to the reception desk on arrival and undergo usual screening processes for entry, including having their temperature taken
 - o only visit the resident
 - o wear PPE as directed by staff
 - o enter and leave the facility directly without spending time in communal areas
 - o perform hand hygiene before entering and after leaving the resident's room and the facility.

When can the facility return to usual COVID-19 practices

- > When there are no new COVID-19 positive cases for 14 days from the onset of symptoms of the last case.

If you have concerns

- > If residents or families/carers have concerns about the care, rights or treatment of a resident, they can:
 - o Speak with facility management directly.
 - o Contact the Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) on **(08) 8232 5377** or **1800 700 600** (Toll Free). ARAS provides free, confidential information and advocacy support to residents and

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their families or representatives, and can advocate on their behalf directly with the aged care provider or with relevant government departments.

- Make a complaint to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission on **1800 951 822 at any time** (free call) or by visiting <http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint>.

Further information

Advice in relation to aged care facility visitation in South Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found at:

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/conditions/infectious+diseases/covid+2019/covid-19+response/aged+care+facility+visitation+in+south+australia+-+covid-19>

ⁱ If a resident has indicated in their Advance Care Directive they do not wish to be transferred to hospital, this instruction is not binding in the event of a pandemic emergency.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

For more information

Office for Ageing Well
Department for Health and Wellbeing
SA Health, Government of South Australia

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

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