



Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for residential aged care staff and visitors in restricted areas – 30 July 2020

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Who should read this?

This factsheet is for residential aged care facilities (RACFs) located in the Stage 3 ‘Stay at Home’ restricted areas.

This information is for staff, associated staff and visitors, including health practitioners and volunteers at residential aged care services in these restricted areas.

What escalation measures are recommended?

The Department of Health and Human Services advises that RACFs located in restricted areas should escalate their outbreak prevention measures due to the increased community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

As outlined in the *COVID-19 Residential Aged Care Facilities Plan for Victoria*, the recommendation is to transition from *Stage 1: initial containment* to *Stage 2: targeted action*. Where a RACFs has a confirmed case or outbreak, *Stage 3: Peak action* should be implemented.

All residential services located within a designated restricted area - as identified by Victoria’s current restriction levels <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19> - should consider implementing the following additional escalated outbreak prevention measures as a matter of priority:

For residents

- Implement daily screening of residents for symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) using the [COVID-19 screening tool for residential aged care services](#), including taking daily observations - especially temperature.
- Defer routine medical appointments and medical investigations or the non-essential movement of residents in and out of the RACF and consider alternatives such as telehealth consultations.
- Minimise non-essential transfers of residents.
- Cease all communal dining and review supplies of disposable crockery and cutlery in case of an outbreak.
- Cohort resident groups with dedicated staff to minimise potential transmission.
- Residents who leave their RACFs are required to wear a face covering or face mask for their protection, as are other community members when they leave their home. [There some are exemptions that apply](#).

For staff, workers and visitors

- Discourage non-essential visitors, staff and volunteers from attending the RACF.
- Introduce a dedicated staffing model across the service in order to cohort staff groups to minimise transmission risk.
- Where possible, minimise staff members (clinical or non-clinical) working across different units or sites to minimise impact if there is an outbreak.
- Keep a record of staff who work across other sites or workplaces to assist with contact tracing, should there be a positive case or cases of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Review and consider limiting staff planned leave to allow for workforce surge capacity.
- Limit non-essential staff meetings and consider alternatives such as teleconferencing.
- Postpone routine educational meetings or conduct via other methods such as video conferencing or webinars.
- All RACFs workers are required to wear a single use face mask (surgical mask) while at work.
 - Please see the factsheets: [PPE Guidance for residential aged care](#) and [Using face coverings in residential aged care](#)

For the facility

- Reinforce the importance of infection prevention and control precautions.
- Implement daily to twice daily environmental cleaning and disinfection in accordance with case and contact management guidelines [Coronavirus disease 2019: Case and contact management guidelines for health services and general practitioners](#).
- Review supplies of disposable crockery and cutlery, as this may be advised to be used in the event of a positive case or cases of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Complete a stock take of all consumables, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), (eye protection, masks, non-sterile gloves and gowns), hand hygiene products (including alcohol-based hand rub), testing swabs and cleaning supplies.
- Ask staff who are not required on site to work from home when they are not required in person.
- Review that there are appropriate signs in place at the entrances and other strategic locations within the RACF to inform residents, staff and visitors of the infection prevention and control requirements.
- Ensure regular, clear and transparent communication about the enhanced outbreak management strategy and actions is provided to all residents, families, staff, regular visitors and volunteers.

In addition, it is recommended that the following escalation measures be considered

- Quarantine all new admission/readmissions from hospitals in restricted areas for 14 days in a single room with ensuite (where possible). Strategies for providing support to the resident while in quarantine will need to be implemented, including a risk assessment and consultation with their medical practitioner.
- Prepare for additional resident emergency leave requests from family members.

What are the requirements for staff about the use of face coverings in RACFs?

All staff and workers in RACFs are **required** to wear single use face masks (surgical masks), and follow this advice:

- perform hand hygiene before and after putting on the mask
- do not touch the front of your mask while putting it on, wearing it or taking it off
- the mask must cover the mouth and nose
- masks should not be worn for more than four hours
- masks should be changed before four hours if the mask is soiled, contaminated, damaged or damp
- if masks are removed, they must be immediately disposed of
- masks must be removed during breaks
- masks must not be pulled down to eat or drink or worn around the neck.

Staff must undertake a risk assessment as to whether other PPE is required when providing care to residents. Please refer to [PPE Guidance for residential aged care](#).

What are the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements if there is an outbreak?

For staff who are working in a RACF where there is an outbreak, or where they are working with a COVID-19 positive resident, please refer to [PPE Guidance for residential aged care](#).

Where a RACFs has a confirmed case or outbreak, Stage 3 of the [COVID-19 Residential Aged Care Facilities Plan for Victoria](#) should be implemented.

Are there any changes to the rules around visiting RACFs in restricted areas?

RACFs in restricted areas should communicate that visits are further restricted. The number of visits will either be limited to once per day, or the minimum amount necessary to provide the essential support, care, or service in accordance with the [Care Facilities Directions](#)¹.

All visitors must wear a face covering while attending a RACF ([some exemptions apply](#)). They must wear the face covering throughout their visit.

Visitors are required to comply with any staff directions around PPE requirements while attending the RACFs. Visitors must continue to practice physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene within the RACFs.

See factsheet: Residential aged care: restrictions on entry, contractors and visitors which can be found <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>.

¹ Under emergency management powers of the [Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#), the Chief Health Officer may issue written directions considered necessary to alleviate a public health emergency

Are there any restrictions on who can be admitted or transferred to a residential aged care facility?

No. There are no restrictions on residents from restricted areas being admitted or transferred to RACFs. RACFs should consider whether new admissions/readmissions/transfers should be quarantined for 14 days if they are coming from a restricted area.

Can staff or essential workers who live in restricted areas still go to work?

Yes. There are no restrictions on staff or essential workers from restricted areas attending work where this is required in person. All workers must be screened, and any workers who are unwell must not work. All workers must wear a single use face mask (surgical mask).

Any worker who has COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, must be tested, and cannot return to work until they have received a negative result. Those who can work from home, should work from home.

If you are a close contact of someone who tests positive, you must isolate as directed by the Public Health Unit.

Can people from restricted areas visit RACFs in other parts of Victoria?

Visitors from restricted areas can only leave the restricted area for limited reasons including caregiving. The number of visits will be either be limited to once per day, or the minimum amount necessary to provide the essential support, care, or service in accordance with the [Care Facilities Directions](#).

All visitors should wear a face covering while attending a RACF ([some exemptions apply](#)). They should wear the face covering throughout their visit.

Visitors must continue to practice physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene within the RACFs.

Visitors are required to comply with any staff directions around PPE requirements while attending the RACFs.

Visitors from restricted areas, who pass screening are not required to show evidence that they have been tested as a condition of their visitation.

RACFs should not request evidence of a visitor's address in order to prevent entry. If there is concern about behaviour in breach of restrictions, RACFs should follow the suggested process in the [COVID-19 Residential Aged Care Facilities Plan for Victoria](#), and explain that the consequences of non-compliance places the health and safety of residents, staff and the community at risk. As a last resort, the matter should be referred to Victoria Police.

Is testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) mandatory for staff from restricted areas to enter RACFs?

No. Staff from restricted areas, are not required to be tested, and are not required to show evidence that they have been tested as a condition of their employment or visitation.

Workers undergo asymptomatic testing are able to continue to work while they await their test results. Workers who are symptomatic who have a test **must not** work and **must stay at home** while they await the results of their test.

What screening should RACFs have in place?

Symptom and temperature screening should remain in place in all facilities, as detailed in the [Care Facilities Directions](#).

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) screening in RACFs includes:
 - That they have not arrived in Australia from overseas in the last 14 days, and
 - That they have not had known contact in the last 14 days with a person who is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), and
 - They do not have a temperature over 37.5 degrees, or symptoms of acute respiratory infection (fever, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath or other respiratory symptoms), and
 - That they have not been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) and not yet been given clearance from isolation, and
 - That they meet the Influenza vaccination requirements.
- Daily screening of residents for symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) should be implemented utilising [COVID-19 screening tool for residential aged care services](#). This should include taking daily observations, and resident temperatures.

Staff and visitors from restricted areas who are not required to be tested and are not required to show evidence that they have been tested as a condition of their employment or visitation. Visitor entry is determined by the [Care Facilities Directions](#).

Unwell people must not enter the RACF and must, instead, get tested and self-isolate while awaiting their results.

Are there any changes to PPE guidelines?

While the guidelines have not changed, as above, there are now requirements for mask usage in RACFs for all staff and workers, and face coverings for visitors.

For further PPE guidance:

- [PPE Guidance for residential aged care](#)
- [Using face masks in residential aged care](#)
- [How to put on \(don\) and take off \(doff\) your PPE](#)
- [Access to PPE for Residential Aged Care Facilities in Victoria](#)

Where can I get more information?

The Victorian and Commonwealth governments have developed COVID-19 aged care specific websites with resources and guidelines.

The situation and action required is changing rapidly. We recommend you regularly check these websites, and subscribe to updates:

Department of Health and Human Services (Victoria)

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-update>

Department of Health (Commonwealth)

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/advice-for-people-at-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-in-aged-care-facilities>

Advice for residential aged care staff and visitors in relation to restricted areas

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