



Influenza vaccination advice for residential aged care staff and visitors

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update 6 May 2020

Who should read this?

This factsheet is for residential aged care providers, staff and visitors, including health practitioners and volunteers. We encourage everyone to take every possible step to help stop the spread of flu this winter and protect our health system.

Influenza vaccinations for staff and visitors in aged care services

All people attending a residential aged care service, other than residents, must now have an up to date influenza vaccination (if such a vaccination is available to them) in order to be present on the premises.

Aged care providers are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that these directions are being followed and a person does not enter or remain on the premises if they do not meet the influenza vaccination requirements. There are penalties that apply for the individual and for businesses that do not comply.

This advice conforms with the Deputy Chief Health Officer of Victoria's Care Facilities Directions (No. 2). The Directions are in accordance with the declared a state of emergency throughout the State of Victoria due to the serious risk to public health in Victoria from coronavirus (COVID-19) and are consistent with the decisions made by National Cabinet announced by the Prime Minister on 18 March 2020.

Can staff who are unable to have an influenza vaccination continue to work in residential aged care services during the state of emergency?

Yes, staff who are unable to have an influenza vaccination can continue to work in a residential aged care service during this period. They are required to provide evidence from a medical practitioner as to the reason they are unable to have the vaccination. However, services may consider whether they wish to deploy these staff elsewhere during this period.

Can staff who choose not to have an influenza vaccination continue to work in residential aged care services during the state of emergency?

No. Staff who choose not to have an influenza vaccination are not able to work in a residential aged care service during this period.

Can visitors who are unable to have an influenza vaccination, attend a residential aged care service during the state of emergency?

Yes. Visitors who unable to have an influenza vaccination due to medical reasons can visit; however, they are required to provide evidence, from a medical practitioner, as to the reason they cannot have the vaccination. Services should encourage visitors who cannot have an influenza vaccination to only visit for compassionate reasons and end of life care.

Can visitors who provide support and care, who choose not to have an influenza vaccination attend a RACS during the state of emergency?

No. Visitors who choose not to have an influenza vaccination are not able to visit a residential aged care service during this period.

Do residential aged care service providers need to assess the influenza vaccination status of contractors undertaking facility maintenance?

Yes. The residential aged care service should take all reasonable steps to ensure any contractors who attend a residential care service to undertake facility maintenance has an up to date influenza vaccination.

What is the responsibility of the residential aged care service provider during an emergency to assess an emergency responder or law enforcer's influenza vaccination status?

The residential aged care service should:

- check whether the responders have an up to date influenza vaccination as soon as is practicable
- take all reasonable steps to ensure any emergency responders, including Ambulance Victoria and contracted Non-emergency patient transport (NEPT), or law enforcers who attend a residential care service for an emergency, who do not have an up to date influenza vaccination must only remain on the premise for no longer than is necessary to manage the initial emergency response.

What evidence of influenza vaccination immunisation is considered?

Residential aged care services should document that evidence of influenza immunisation status was requested and provided from all visitors and staff entering the facility. Appropriate evidence might include:

- a statement or record from a health practitioner or
- an immunisation history statement from Medicare online or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app.
- A visitor or worker may also offer to complete a statutory declaration that they have received an up to date influenza vaccination. A statutory declaration is a legally binding document and would be acceptable evidence that the person is making a truthful statement that they have an up to date influenza vaccination.
- The declaration should reference relevant details such as the date and location where the immunisation occurred.

Residential aged care services should also maintain records to substantiate compliance with this requirement.

Where can I get more information?

The Victorian and Commonwealth governments have developed coronavirus (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>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts>