



Factsheet - Restrictions on entry and visitors into residential aged care facilities

Updated 29 April 2020

Older people are particularly at risk of contracting coronavirus (COVID-19) and this means that, along with the physical distancing and infection control measures we are all required to adhere to, there are also additional ways to protect older Victorians.

The [Care Facilities Directions \(No. 2\)](#), (the Directions) restrict visitor access across a range of aged care facilities. The Directions apply to all Australian Government (Commonwealth) funded residential aged care facilities and implement the position of the National Cabinet regarding entry of visitors.

Does this mean residents will not be able to have visitors?

No. Residents can have visitors who provide essential care and support, but it will be restricted.

Under the Directions, except for end of life care, a resident may only have one care and support visit for no longer than two hours, with a maximum of two people visiting each day. Anyone under 16 years of age will not be able to visit, unless it is for end of life care and support.

These restrictions and conditions apply to all visitors. You can't visit if you have temperature higher than 37.5 degrees celsius or flu-like symptoms (however mild), such as a sore throat, a cough, or shortness of breath. Visitors should also have an up-to-date influenza vaccination. Information about influenza vaccination requirements can be found here: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

What if there is an outbreak of coronavirus?

Should an outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) occur in the community surrounding the service, it may be appropriate to impose a total lockdown – preventing residents leaving the service and stopping all visits. If there is a coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak within the facility, it will be required to implement its 'COVID-19 management plan'.

Providers must weigh up the restrictions contained in the Directions against the existing obligations owed by aged care operators under the relevant Australian Government legislation, including:

- having regard to dignity of risk - the right to exercise choice and control in decision making about care, personal and social experiences and to exercise independence
- universal infection control - robust screening and physical distancing measures continue to be key to slowing the spread of coronavirus and apply to all staff and visitors of residential aged care facilities.

What measures are in place to make visits as safe as possible?

[The COVID-19 Residential Aged Care Facilities Plan](#) (the Plan) provides information on how aged care services are working to keep residents, staff and visitors safe. This includes:

- Facilities undertaking temperature checking and health screening of all staff, visitors and attendees before entering the facility.

- Increased communication with residents, families and others about the visitor restrictions and provision of ongoing information to help them understand the restrictions and how they will affect their interactions.
- Scheduling visits to ensure there is a total limit on the number of visitors to the service at any one time and in accordance with the Directions.
- Visitors are restricted to certain areas.
- Cleaning and infection control measures required after each visit are put into place.
- Facilities making alternative arrangements to support families, friends and others to maintain regular contact with residents that do not require face-to-face visits, such as organising video conferencing calls, setting up a social communication internet page and reading out and sending emails on behalf of residents.

All of these measures are in place to allow visitors into the facility in accordance with the Directions and balance the health and safety of residents and staff, while supporting appropriate infection control.

Will family be able to be with someone to provide end of life support?

Yes. The Directions allow for family and loved ones to provide end of life support to a resident. Restrictions on the number and age of visitors do not apply when support is being provided to a dying resident but should be managed carefully.

Who else can enter a residential aged care facility?

Other than a resident's family and loved ones, only essential services can enter a residential aged care facility.

Essential services include:

- Regular staff of the service who provide clinical care, food services, administrative functions, cleaning and other essential non-clinical contractors.
- Other visiting clinical staff such as visiting medical officers, general practitioners, geriatricians, palliative care physicians and other medical specialists; pharmacy services; specialist nurses; diagnostics services; and allied health services, for example, physiotherapists.

This means clinical visits will be limited to essential assessments and management for residents' health conditions, including assessment and management of coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms.

Other assessments and clinical activities may be postponed if they do not have adverse impacts on the health of the resident. Non-essential service providers, such as hairdressers, cannot enter the facility.

When are visits not allowed?

Residential aged care facilities will be undertaking screening of all visitors. No visitor can enter or remain on the premises of a facility in Victoria if they meet one or more of the following conditions:

- the person has a temperature higher than 37.5 degrees celsius or symptoms of acute respiratory infection
- the person does not have an up to date influenza vaccination, where a vaccination is available to the person
- the person has been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) and has not yet been given clearance from isolation (self-isolation).

These conditions apply to all visitors regardless of age, including essential staff and visiting service providers such as those providing care and support, and end of life support.

A person who ignores these conditions and restrictions will be liable for fines of up to \$20,000 or up to \$100,000 in the case of companies and other bodies corporate.

Are there any other requirements for visiting?

Essential visitors must:

- visit only the resident
- wear personal protective equipment as directed by staff
- enter and leave the facility directly without spending time in communal areas
- perform hand hygiene before entering and after leaving the resident's room.

How can I make a complaint?

If you or a family member or loved one is unhappy with how a facility is managing visitors, contact the facility manager or director of nursing to discuss your concerns.

If this discussion does not resolve the matter, you can contact the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to make a complaint. The Commission can be contacted [here](#) or on 1800 951 822.

Where can I get more information?

Information from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services can be found at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>.

The Australian Government, Department of Health, website also provides up-to-date information and advice <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>.

Advice produced by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission on 22 April 2020 to support providers, cares and consumers during visitor restrictions due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic can be found at https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/ACQSC_Visitor_restrictions_V6.pdf.