



Residential Aged Care Restrictions

31 December 2020

Summary of current directions and precautions

This factsheet is a summary of the current restrictions and necessary precautions to be taken by Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) in Victoria.

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If you have a case at your facility:

Residential aged care facilities should notify positive coronavirus (COVID-19) test results by email to the Australian Department of Health: agedcareCOVIDcases@health.gov.au and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services: teamone.ccom@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

All confirmed cases in a RACF resident or staff member must be notified to the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services hotline **1300 651 160**.

First 24 hours

The Australian Government Department of Health has produced guidance for managing coronavirus (COVID-19) in a residential aged care facility in the [first 24 hours](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/first-24-hours-managing-covid-19-in-a-residential-aged-care-facility) <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/first-24-hours-managing-covid-19-in-a-residential-aged-care-facility>.

Initial communications

You must clearly and promptly tell residents, their nominated representatives, families and staff about positive test results. We have developed the [initial communications fact sheet](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/aged-care-facilities-initial-communications) to help providers <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/aged-care-facilities-initial-communications>.

Key supports

- Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) in RACFs: [Assessment and testing criteria for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/assessment-and-testing-criteria-coronavirus-covid-19) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/assessment-and-testing-criteria-coronavirus-covid-19>.
- Notifications hotline: 1300 651 160.
- [Infection prevention control resources](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/infection-prevention-control-resources-covid-19): <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/infection-prevention-control-resources-covid-19>.
- [Establishing an outbreak management team](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/infection-control-guidelines/respiratory-illness-management-in-aged-care-facilities): <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/infection-control-guidelines/respiratory-illness-management-in-aged-care-facilities>.
- [Rural infection control consultants](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/quality-safety-service/infection-prevention/rural-infection-centres): <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/quality-safety-service/infection-prevention/rural-infection-centres>.
- [Residential In-Reach services information](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/rehabilitation-complex-care/health-independence-program/specialist-hip-clinics): <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/rehabilitation-complex-care/health-independence-program/specialist-hip-clinics>.

General requirements

All workers and visitors must wear a face mask inside residential aged care facilities:

- Visitors must wear a fitted face mask (surgical or cloth face mask) at all times.
- Workers must wear a surgical face mask if there are no known cases, suspected cases or quarantining persons in the facility; otherwise N95 masks are required (see below advice on PPE requirements).

All visitors must continue to practice physical distancing (by staying at least 1.5 metres away from others), respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and hand hygiene, within the RACF.

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

Enhanced restrictions:

Given the cases identified on 31 December 2020, enhanced restrictions are recommended in addition to the existing restrictions. These are cited throughout this document.

Additional restrictions also apply to Mentone, Mitcham and Hallam and/or a listed exposure site. These are noted throughout this document. RACFs should also consider any person that has visited a listed exposure site as a person needing to be tested and quarantined. Please be aware for updates on additional affected areas and exposure sites if/when more cases are known.

Excluded persons:

A worker or visitor must not enter a RACF if they:

- are not wearing a fitted face mask (unless an exception applies). A face shield on its own does not meet the mask requirement.
- are unwell or have even the mildest symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19):
 - fever or temperature over 37.5 degrees Celsius

- loss or change in sense of smell or taste,
- chills or sweats,
- cough,
- sore throat,
- shortness of breath,
- and/or runny nose
- have coronavirus (COVID-19) and are currently required to isolate
- have been in contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) within the last 14 days and are currently required to quarantine - ****Note: this currently applies to any person that have lived or visited a restricted area in NSW and is required to quarantine, see <www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/travel-restrictions-new-south-wales>****
- have been tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) due to symptoms and not yet received a result
- have arrived in Australia from overseas in the last 14 days.

In order to ensure excluded persons are prevented from entering the facility, the screening and declaration process is required.

Restrictions for people from or who have visited NSW

The Public Health Unit, DHHS has categorised several areas of NSW as areas of higher risk for coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. Please refer to the list on the coronavirus website for an up to date list of [restricted areas](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/travel-restrictions-new-south-wales) <<http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/travel-restrictions-new-south-wales>>.

Residential aged care facilities must ensure that all current screening processes include the ability to screen for visitors and staff who have lived in or visited the restricted NSW zones.

Any staff member or visitor who has visited these restricted zones since 11 December 2020 should be considered an excluded person as they would be required to quarantine. Excluded persons cannot enter the facility for any reason. This includes any persons visiting for any purpose (including end of life) unless they have a specific exemption granted by the Chief Health Officer pursuant to Clause 5(5) of the Care Facilities Directions.

Keeping in contact

Where a person cannot visit, RACFs are required to take reasonable steps to provide and help residents to use alternative contact methods to communicate with people who cannot visit them, like phone and video calls.

Declarations for staff and visitors

Staff and visitors to RACFs are required to declare in writing at the start of each shift or before entering a facility that they:

- do not have any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- are not a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) case
- are not currently required to isolate or quarantine, as directed by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Declarations can be on paper, an app or equivalent providing it is in writing. A parent or guardian can make a declaration for their child.

In addition to the written declaration, all staff and visitors must be checked for symptoms, including checking for a temperature over 37.5 degrees Celsius.

Enhanced worker screening and declarations

Existing screening including the excluded persons screening (e.g. temperature checks) and declarations. In addition, workers living in Mentone, Mitcham or Hallam OR those found to have visited listed exposure sites are to be offered testing.

Penalties apply

The Chief Health Officer has issued directions to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and protect people who are vulnerable and the broader community. Compliance with all of the directions is a legal requirement. Under section 203 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic) penalties for non-compliance apply to both residential aged care facility operators and workers.

Worker requirements

Mobility restrictions for workers

Workers from an outbreak site

A worker from a site that has an outbreak cannot commence work at any other site without first quarantining for 14 days (while not working at any site). They also must present a negative test result from a test taken four or less days before starting at the new site.

One site, one worker

Facilities must continue to minimise workers working at more than one site as much as practicable, for example, with rosters. Where a worker is to attend more than one site, records must be kept to ensure prompt contact tracing if required.

If a worker must work at more than one site/employer, they are still required to declare if and where they have worked previously before beginning their shift.

Additionally, we encourage RACFs to ensure staff are dedicated/cohorted to areas of the RACFs and to support residents to minimise transmission risks and minimise staff close contacts within the RACFs should there be an outbreak.

Enhanced mobility restrictions

Where practicable, restrictions on working across multiple facilities AND staff cohorting within facilities should continue to be implemented and enhanced where possible.

Asymptomatic (surveillance) testing of workers

RACFs are required to carry out asymptomatic testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) on employees and contractors (clinical and non-clinical) where directed by the Chief Health Officer (or their delegate), and in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Health and Human Services.

This asymptomatic testing continues to assist the epidemiological analysis and act as an early warning system in helping to keep vulnerable Victorians and staff in aged care safe.

The Victorian Government acknowledges and thanks RACF workers for their assistance with this important public health measure.

For more information on asymptomatic testing of staff in non-government RACFs read the Australian Government's [Protecting Older Australians: COVID-19 update 16 October 2020](https://www.health.gov.au/news/newsletters/protecting-older-australians-covid-19-update-16-october-2020)

<<https://www.health.gov.au/news/newsletters/protecting-older-australians-covid-19-update-16-october-2020#testing-of-asymptomatic-residential-aged-care-workers-in-victoria>>.

Enhanced worker screening and declarations

Existing screening including the excluded persons screening (e.g. temperature checks) and declarations. In addition, workers living in Mentone, Mitcham or Hallam OR those found to have visited listed exposure sites are to be offered testing.

General facility requirements

Daily screening of residents

Residents should be screened using Safer Care Victoria's [COVID-19 tool](#) daily.

Research into coronavirus (COVID-19) highlights different symptoms may be present in older people. Instead of fever and sore throat, atypical signs such as seeming unwell, being upset or sleeping more may indicate illness and require further investigation.

Broader and regular screening of older people living in aged care is encouraged to ensure early identification and response to symptoms of deterioration.

To find out more about the tool, go to Safer Care Victoria's [COVID-19 screening tool for residential aged care services](https://www.bettersafecare.vic.gov.au/clinical-guidance/older-people/covid-19-screening-tool-for-residential-aged-care-services) webpage <<https://www.bettersafecare.vic.gov.au/clinical-guidance/older-people/covid-19-screening-tool-for-residential-aged-care-services>>.

Steps to mitigate spread of COVID-19

All RACFs are to have a COVIDSafe plan.

For more guidance and tools, go to <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#guidance-and-tools-for-aged-care-facilities>.

For infection prevention and control resources, go to: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/infection-prevention-control-resources-covid-19>

Balancing safety and wellbeing

RACFs are required to take into account residents' physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing when implementing infection prevention and control measures to protect residents and limit the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Electronic communication

RACFs are required to take reasonable steps to provide and help residents to use alternative contact methods to communicate with people who cannot visit them, like phone and video calls.

Record keeping requirements

All RACFs are required to retain records to demonstrate compliance with the directions, such as:

- COVIDSafe Plan
- work rosters
- asymptomatic testing of employees and contractors, as requested.

RACFs are required to take all reasonable steps to protect personal information from use or disclosure (other than disclosure to an Authorised Officer, for example, for use in contact tracing).

Cleaning and personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements

RACFs are required to comply with cleaning and PPE in accordance with DHHS requirements. For more information go to <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#personal-protective-equipment-ppe>.

Enhanced PPE requirements

All workers are to wear surgical masks AND eye protection at all times. Tier 3 PPE (including N95 masks) is required for staff when they are entering the rooms of or providing care to symptomatic, suspected or confirmed COVID residents.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene should be performed using an approved, alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water and dry with a disposable towel:

- before entering the resident's room
- before touching a resident
- immediately before a procedure (e.g. doing a BSL)
- before putting on (donning), and throughout the taking off (doffing) of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- immediately after a procedure or body fluid exposure risk
- after touching a resident (e.g. following personal care)
- after touching the resident's items or surroundings (e.g. after making a bed)
- after leaving the resident's room

More information on hand hygiene go to <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/infection-prevention-and-control/national-hand-hygiene-initiative> and <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/infection-control-guidelines/respiratory-illness-management-in-aged-care-facilities>.

No outbreak

Even when there is no outbreak, workers must wear a surgical mask at all times. In addition, workers should:

- perform hand hygiene before and after putting on a mask
- 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 soiled, contaminated, damaged or damp
- masks must not be worn around the neck
- masks must be worn when talking but not eating or drinking - masks can be removed while actually eating or drinking (placing food or drink in the mouth) in a designated staff tea room.
- if masks are removed, they must be immediately disposed of.

Note:

- In a staff tearoom, all staff must continue to practice physical distancing (by staying at least 1.5 metres away from others), respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and hand hygiene.
- Staff must undertake a risk assessment as to whether other PPE is required when providing care to residents.

Suspected case or quarantine

All staff who enter the room of a resident who is a close contact and in quarantine or a suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in isolation must wear appropriate PPE at all times.

Donning and doffing PPE

Staff should receive training on putting on (donning) and removing (doffing) PPE. There is a specific sequence for putting on and removing PPE. For more information, see [How to put on and take off your PPE \(PDF\) poster](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/how-put-and-take-your-ppe) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/how-put-and-take-your-ppe>>. It is recommended that this is supervised where possible. If there are any suspected or confirmed cases, supervision of PPE donning and doffing will support staff compliance and ensure it is correctly undertaken.

For more information on [How to put on \(don\) and take off \(doff\) your personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202008/COVID-19_How%20to%20put%20on%20and%20take%20off%20your%20PPE_Gown%20and%20gloves%20separately.pdf):

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202008/COVID-19_How%20to%20put%20on%20and%20take%20off%20your%20PPE_Gown%20and%20gloves%20separately.pdf>.

Disposal of PPE

All used or contaminated PPE should be disposed of as clinical waste as per standard practice.

Useful information that outlines how clinical waste should be managed includes:

- Environmental Protection Authority's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Disposing clinical waste \(1901.1\)](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/publications/1901-1) <<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/publications/1901-1>>.
- [Clinical waste guidelines – supplement for healthcare staff](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/clinical-related-waste-guidance) <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/clinical-related-waste-guidance>>.

Refer to the COVID-19 Plan for the Victorian Aged Care Sector available at [Aged care sector - coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>>.

Cleaning

For more information on cleaning and disinfection: [Coronavirus disease 2019: Case and contact management guidelines for health services and general practitioners](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>>.

Visitor restrictions

Enhanced restrictions apply to any visitors (see below).

In the Care Facility Directions, there are no limits on the purpose of visits, the number of visitors or the length of the visit to care facilities. Visits to people living in care facilities are no longer limited by Chief Health Officer directions. Temporary enhanced restrictions apply in addition to density limits below.

For more information go to www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/visiting-care-facilities

Excluded Persons

Excluded persons cannot enter the facility for any reason. This includes any persons visiting for any purpose (including end of life) unless they have a specific exemption granted by the Chief Health Officer pursuant to Clause 5(5) of the Care Facilities Directions.

Currently visitors from restricted areas in NSW are excluded persons. See here for up to date locations: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/travel-restrictions-new-south-wales>

Enhanced restrictions

The following enhanced restrictions apply (ie only these visitors are able to attend) statewide:

- **Parent/guardian of a resident who is a minor:** Where the resident is aged under 18 years—the visitor is the parent or guardian of the resident or has temporary care of the resident (very few limits)
- **'Normal' visitors:** Where the visitor is the parent, guardian, partner, carer or support person of the resident, and the person's visit is for the purpose of providing emotional, cultural, spiritual or social support to the resident that cannot reasonably be provided by that person via electronic or other non-contact means (1 visitor at any time, once per day for max 2hrs)
- **Essential care persons:** Visitor's presence at the facility is for the purposes of providing essential care and support necessary for the resident's physical wellbeing that optimises the care and support delivered by workers at the facility and cannot reasonably be provided by that person via electronic means (1 visitor, no time limits)
- **Essential behaviour assistance person:** Visitor's presence at the facility is necessary to support individual behaviours of concern, such as for people living with dementia, cognitive impairment or cognitive disability, or who have a known or emerging serious mental illness (no time limits)
- **Interpreters** or informal language support (no time limit)
- Visitor is being assisted to handover care for discharge (max 2 hrs)
- Visitor is viewing facility as a potential site to live in (max 2 hrs)
- **End of life** – 2 visitors, no time limit

Residents can still leave RACFs

Under current restriction levels, residents can leave their care facility for any reason, provided they comply with current restrictions in Victoria.

When residents leave the facility, they should be reminded of the current restrictions and public health advice, including:

- physical distancing (maintaining 1.5m distance from others)
- wearing a fitted face mask when indoors or otherwise required*, and when you cannot maintain 1.5m distance outdoors. This means carrying a mask with you at all times.
- limits on private and public gathering
- not seeing people they know are unwell
- not visiting people who are in quarantine or isolation.

*For more information on when to wear a face mask, please go to: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/face-masks>

Excursions

Travel in vehicles, such as minibuses, for group outings can occur, however, face masks should be worn and physical distancing maintained if possible while in the vehicle.

Where the vehicle transport is operated by the care facility (or a similar organisation), the transport can only occur in accordance with a COVIDSafe Plan, which outlines how the activity can be managed in a COVIDSafe way. This would include measures such as recording who used the vehicle, regular cleaning of the vehicle, and encouraging driving with windows down to aid ventilation.

The destination for any excursion must also be permitted by the public health directions.

For more information about permitted activities, see [COVIDsafe Summer](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-COVIDSafe-Summer)
<<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-COVIDSafe-Summer>>.

Returning to the RACF

Residents should be screened upon their return using Safer Care Victoria's [COVID-19 tool](#).

Residents do not need to be isolated upon their return. However, if they are a suspected case or have spent time with someone that would otherwise have been an excluded person – this includes persons from or who have visited the [restricted zones in NSW](#) – then precautions that treat these residents as a suspected case is recommended.

To find out more about the tool, go to Safer Care Victoria's [COVID-19 screening tool for residential aged care services](#) webpage <<https://www.bettersafecare.vic.gov.au/clinical-guidance/older-people/covid-19-screening-tool-for-residential-aged-care-services>>.

Enhanced restrictions

On admission or return to facility from leave, residents having lived in or visited Mentone, Mitcham or Hallam OR have visited a listed exposure site should to be tested and managed as a suspected COVID-19 case until results are known.

Residents and their families/decision makers should be advised of this requirement prior to the resident leaving the RACFs.

To find out more information about coronavirus and how to stay safe visit [DHHS.vic – coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>>

If you need an interpreter, call the coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline 1800 675 398 and press 0.



For information in other languages, scan the QR code or visit

[DHHS.vic – Translated resources - coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/translated-resources-coronavirus-disease-covid-19)

<<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/translated-resources-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>>



For any questions

Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 (24 hours)

Please keep triple zero (000) for emergencies only

To receive this document in another format phone 1300 651 160 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email the Department of Health and Human Services](mailto:covid-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <covid-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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Available at: [DHHS.vic – coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>>