

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Information for Visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities

Visiting residential aged care facilities

This factsheet will help you understand the restrictions on visiting residential aged care facilities in South Australia, and how you can still keep in touch with your family and friends. These measures have been put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and keep vulnerable members of our community well.

Visiting restrictions

Due to COVID-19, the State Coordinator made a [Direction](#) under the *Emergency Management Act 2004* to limit entry into residential aged care facilities in South Australia.

These measures have been put in place as a precaution to ensure vulnerable older South Australians continue to remain safe from COVID-19. It is important that all visitors practice good hand hygiene, wear a surgical mask at all times, cough and sneeze into their elbow or a tissue, and maintain social distancing of 1.5 metres.

Prohibited to visit

Until further notice, you are not permitted to enter or remain on the premises of a residential aged care facility in South Australia if:

- > You have entered South Australia from overseas (other than New Zealand) in the last 14 days.
- > You have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days (unless adequate personal protective equipment was worn).
- > You have a fever (>38), or have a history of fever and chills in the past 72 hours, or symptoms of acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath) or loss of taste or smell.
- > You have undertaken a COVID-19 test and are awaiting the test result, unless this was a routine COVID-19 test required to be undertaken due to cross border travel.
- > You have not been vaccinated against 2020 seasonal influenza, unless you:
 - o have a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine (you will need a letter from your doctor to confirm this), or
 - o you cannot access a flu vaccine as it is not reasonably available, or
 - o you are an infant aged 6 months or less.

In addition, if you have been at any of the affected locations from the Parafield Cluster at the listed times, you cannot visit or attend a RACF until you have been tested for COVID-19 and received a negative result. For a list of affected locations, visit:

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVIDcontacttracing.

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Permitted to visit

At present, residents can receive one visit by up to two family members or friends per day. The operator of a residential aged care facility (RACF) may approve additional care and support visits for a resident, if appropriate or required under the circumstances.

Processes should be put in place to ensure that residents are able to receive visitors safely. This includes appropriate screening of visitors upon entry to the RACF. Visits should be conducted in a resident's room, outdoors, or in a specific area designated by the RACF, rather than communal areas. Visitors to a RACF must wear a mask at all times when in the physical presence of other people, except when eating or drinking or if aged under 12 years old.

Provided you do not fall into any of the prohibited categories listed above, you may visit a residential aged care facility for the following reasons:

- > You are providing care and support to a resident. This includes visits by relatives and friends (including children).
- > You are an employee, contractor, student or volunteer at the facility.
 - Personal care workers are not permitted to work at more than one residential aged care facility, within a 14 day period.
 - You must notify the aged care facility of any additional places of employment you may have, and also notify the aged care facility if you become aware of a COVID1-9 case identified at your additional place of employment.
- > You are a prospective resident (visiting with one support person for no more than two hours).
- > You are providing goods or services necessary for the effective operation of the facility, or other professional services at the facility (such as hairdressing or advocacy).
- > You are providing health, medical or pharmaceutical services to a resident(s).
- > You are providing end of life support to a resident for whom death is imminent (likely within 2 weeks).
- > You are there for the purposes of emergency management or law enforcement, such a police, ambulance and fire services. In the event of an emergency, emergency services personnel may enter the facility regardless of any of the criteria listed in clause 5 of the Direction.
- > You are undertaking regulatory functions or duties, including inspections (e.g. a Regulatory Officer from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission).
- > You are a legal practitioner providing legal advice or services.
- > You are a volunteer who is providing:
 - care and support to a resident; or
 - services necessary for the effective operation of the aged care facility.

When you are visiting a resident, you must follow the guidance of the residential aged care facility. In general:

- > Care and support visits (for example, visits by family members and close friends) are limited to one visit per resident per day, by one person or two people visiting together.
 - Additional care and support visits may be approved by the operator of the aged care facility if appropriate or required under the circumstances.
- > To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, visits should occur in a resident's room, outdoors

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or in a specific area designated by the facility, rather than communal areas.

- > Social distancing of 1.5 metres should be adhered to wherever possible.
- > Any person providing care to a resident who has undertaken a COVID-19 test must wear appropriate PPE when providing care to that resident until the test result is known.
- > All persons (except residents or children under 12 years) on the premises of a RACF must wear a **surgical mask** at all times when in the physical presence of other people, except when eating or drinking.

Compassionate visits

Visits for the purpose of providing end of life support to a resident are permitted, including by children. Operators of residential aged care facilities have been asked to take particular care to balance the need to protect residents, staff and others from the risk of transmission of COVID-19, while supporting the rights and wellbeing of residents and their families.

- > In these circumstances, 'end of life' is defined as a person for whom death is imminent (likely within 2 weeks)
- > There is no limit on the number of people who can visit during this time, however, you must follow the processes put in place by the aged care facility to ensure risk to other residents is minimised.
- > Visitors from overseas are permitted to visit an aged care facility within 14 days of entering South Australia for the purpose of providing end of life support to a resident. However, you must:
 - o wear appropriate PPE at all times when you are on the premises of the of the aged care facility; and
 - o self-quarantine at all times when you are not visiting the facility.
- > **All travellers must complete a cross border travel registration form.** This form is available online at: www.police.sa.gov.au/online-services/cross-border-travel-application.
- > If you are providing end of life support to a resident you will be permitted to visit if you have not yet received your flu vaccination, however, you must take all reasonable steps to get vaccinated as soon as practicable after your initial visit.

During your visit

- > Follow all instructions given by staff of the facility about how and when visits can take place.
- > Wear a surgical mask at all times when on the premises (unless eating or drinking).
- > Practice social distancing by keeping 1.5 metres between yourself and other people whenever possible.
- > Practice good hand hygiene – wash them regularly with soap and water or an alcohol based rub.
- > Practice proper coughing etiquette – cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue.

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Information for residents and prospective residents

Leaving the facility

If you are a resident, you are permitted to leave a residential aged care facility and then return, regardless of your reason for leaving.

When you re-enter a RACF, you will undertake a [screening checklist](#) for COVID-19 on your return. If you indicate 'yes' to any identified risk factors, appropriate strategies will be put in place to mitigate any risks to other residents.

Prospective resident visits

If you are a prospective resident, you may visit a residential aged care facility for purpose of considering whether you will accept a place at that facility.

- > You are allowed to bring one other person with you for the visit.
- > You are allowed to visit for a maximum of 2 hours.
- > You must hold a valid ACAT approval for residential aged care.
- > You must wear a surgical mask at all times when on the premises.

Declared outbreaks in RACF: Self-quarantine period

If a single confirmed case of COVID-19 is detected in a resident, staff member or frequent attendee of a residential aged care facility (RACF), a COVID-19 outbreak will be declared at that facility.

In the event of a COVID-19 outbreak, a prescribed authorised officer may declare a prescribed self-quarantine period in relation to the RACF, ending at the time declared by the prescribed authorised officer.

During a prescribed self-quarantine period, residents are prohibited from leaving the RACF, except in the following circumstances:

- > for urgent medical or dental treatment; or
- > for transfer to hospital; or
- > for transfer to another RACF determined to be suitable by an authorised officer; or
- > in order to self-quarantine at another location, including a family home, approved by an authorised officer.

Note: nothing in the Direction authorises the provision of treatment of a resident that is contrary to a relevant Advance Care Directive.

If a resident is approved to leave the RACF to self-quarantine at a family home or other suitable location during a prescribed self-quarantine period, others residing at that location who are deemed close contacts will also be required to quarantine.

A close contact with another person occurs if they are in the company of the other person:

- > within an enclosed space for a period of more than 2 hours
- > within 1.5m of the other person for a period more than 15 minutes.

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Flu vaccination requirements

From 1 May 2020, to visit a residential aged care facility in South Australia you must be vaccinated against seasonal influenza.

The only exemptions to this requirement are:

- > If you have a medical contraindication to the flu vaccine (such as a person who has a history of anaphylaxis or has had Guillain-Barré Syndrome following vaccination, or who is taking check point inhibitor medication for cancer treatment).
 - o You will need to provide the aged care facility with a letter from a medical practitioner to confirm this before they will allow you to visit.
- > If you are providing emergency services in the event of an emergency.
- > Infants aged 6 months or younger.
- > If all reasonable steps have been taken to access the flu vaccine, and it is not reasonably available.

Visitors will be asked to provide evidence of their immunisation status when visiting. Appropriate evidence may include a statement or record from a health practitioner, or an immunisation history statement available from Medicare online or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app.

If you have not been vaccinated against seasonal influenza, you may be offered a 'window visit' to stay in contact with your loved one. These visits are allowed in the following circumstances:

- > You must remain on the outdoor side of the closed window, with the resident to remain indoors.
- > Social distancing must be maintained at all times and there must be no contact with other visitors or staff on the premises.

While flu vaccination is highly encouraged for residents, if you are a resident of a residential aged care facility you have the right to refuse to be vaccinated.

Exemptions in exceptional circumstances

If you have a situation that you believe constitutes an exceptional circumstance, you can apply for an exemption by writing to the Department for Health and Wellbeing via officeforageingwell@sa.gov.au.

- > Include your contact details and any information relevant to the request, including the urgency of the situation.
- > Requests will be assessed by a prescribed authorised officer as soon as practicable and you will be advised of the outcome.

Note: *The issue of flu vaccination has been considered and no exemptions other than those listed in the Direction will be granted.*

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Staying in touch

It is important to continue to stay in regular touch with family and friends in residential aged care. In addition to visiting, this can include writing a letter, sending a postcard, talking over the phone, or video calling.

Further information

Visit the [Department of Health](https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/department-of-health) website for further information; advice and resources at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare.

For more information

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

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

Information updated 1 December 2020

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