



29 February 2020

Dear Residents and Relatives,

RE: Updates on health news: COVID-19 information and recommended health care actions

As you are aware, in response to the rapid changes in the situation of COVID-19 outbreak around the world, Australian government has provided an emergency management plan guideline for all health sectors including aged care services in preparing for a potential pandemic.

As of today, the number of confirmed cases in Australia remains low (25 cases). 15 of these cases (including the 4 cases in NSW) are reported to have recovered. The remaining cases are in a stable condition. 9 cases are associated with the Diamond Princess repatriation flight from Japan.

While the number of cases of COVID-19 is currently small in Australia, it is possible that this situation could change in a very short period of time.

Within the context of Aged Care Quality Standards, all aged care homes are expected to assess the risk of, and take steps to prevent, detect and control, the spread of infections. Infection management practices, such as isolating infectious individuals and applying standard and additional precautions to prevent transmission, minimise the risk of infection spreading.

Aged care homes often have frequent visitors and carers coming and going, and close physical contact between staff, residents and their families. Elderly residents are more at risk of infections generally, and are particularly vulnerable to serious illness if they do become infected.

With the above in mind, I would like to reiterate the importance of collaboration and cooperation among the aged care home, visitors, families and staff in achieving successful prevention of infection and control. This is an essential factor contributing to our readiness for health emergencies.

Based on the latest information we obtained from NSW Health on 27/02/2020, we have adjusted our precautionary measures as the followings:

- All people in the following circumstances are being asked to cease visiting the residential care nursing homes / facilities for at least 14 days
 - if they are unwell with any symptoms of fever, cough, running nose, or generally unwell; or
 - if they have been identified by their doctors or the Health team at the airport as someone who requires a testing of COVID-19 or home-isolation; or
 - if they have been identified by their doctors or the Health team at the airport as someone who had close contact or in the same household with someone who had been required to attend a testing of COVID-19 or home-isolation; or
 - if they have travelled from Wuhan city and Hubei Province recently; or
 - if they have travelled to, or transited through, mainland China in the past month; or
 - if they have travelled to, or transited through the latest high risk countries / places in the past month including but not limited to: South Korea, Iran, Italy, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Cambodia or Indonesia; or
 - if we have concern about the travel history of the visitors or the people living in the same household as they are.

- All staff who had been away locally or overseas (regardless of countries or places) to go through health screen and travel history check by management prior to their returning to work. We have asked some staff to carry out isolation at home based on their risk of exposure to COVID-19 due to their travel history as additional precautions.

- Alert signs are put up at the entrance door, reception next to the sign in book, and also at all nurses' stations.
- All visitors and staff are requested to sanitise their hands upon arrival.
- For visitors, volunteers, contractors and staff who are coming to our facilities, they will be subjected to temperature and general health / travel history check. Please pause for our staff to use a NON-CONTACT thermometer to check your body temperature via your "forehead" on arrival and have a short chat with you on your recent travel history.
- Increased cleaning routines focusing on cleaning and sanitising handrails, door handles and furniture surface.
- We will continue to ensure adequate supply of PPEs such as masks, gloves, gown, eye protections are kept and maintained for staff to perform care and low risk clinical procedures.
- We will continue monitor the risk in all types of activities to avoid large congregation of people to minimize residents being exposed to potential contagion in the public space.

A 24-hour National Coronavirus Health Information Line is available on 1800 020 080. The line provides health and situation information on the COVID-19 outbreak.

You can also obtain factsheets and resources specifically for aged care staff, residents and families from the Department's website - www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources.

Last but not least, we strongly encourage you to consider the risk of travelling to overseas at the moment during the outbreak of COVID-19 and that you may need to change your plan. If you must travel overseas, please make allowance for the time you may be required to complete quarantine after returning to Australia. Otherwise you may not be allowed to visit the elderly residents residing in our facilities or participate in any facility activity.

Again, please note the above measures are implemented based on current evidence and may be subject to change as more information becomes available.

We sincerely thank you for your co-operation and understanding. Like everyone, we all wish that the COVID-19 outbreak will soon be kept under control and end.

Yours sincerely



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