



ANHF

AUSTRALIAN NURSING HOME FOUNDATION

澳華療養院基金

Culturally Appropriate Aged Care Since 1980

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Dear Residents and Relatives,

COVID-19 Update #43

The Omicron variant is spreading widely and infecting large numbers of people. While spikes in cases have been the norm for the past two years, there are clear indications this wave will differ substantially from previous ones. Omicron is more contagious than other variants and has a greater ability to evade immunity to infection. Epidemiologists projected the Omicron infection will peak in 4 to 6 weeks' time.

As you are aware, the Government's rules are evolving with constant adjustments to their [pandemic management measures](#).

All of our residential aged care facilities had experience outbreak or exposure events that require us to implement full or partial lockdown of the facility, to require residents stay in their rooms and to impose restrictions on visits.

The higher the likelihood of COVID-19 infection with the current variant in the community, the more danger the consequence of COVID-19 to our vulnerable residents, especially those with underlying medical conditions and complications.

In view of the peaking of Omicron virus over the next 4-6 weeks, we regret that we will have to adopt a more conservative approach in managing visiting and resident outings in the following weeks.

What does this mean to you?

1. Visiting to Nursing Home

- All visitors must wear PPE as directed by the facility staff inside the facility.
- **All in-door visits will be temporarily ceased.** We will continue to support residents to connect to their family by phone or by audio visual means; or our staff will continue to support "window visit" or outdoor visit; or transport dropped off food or other items to the residents.
- Exemptions will be granted by Facility Manager to residents require essential care or End-of-Life visits provided that all visitors have passed screening including Rapid Antigen Test (RAT), and are compliant with PPE and visiting protocols.
- Visitors are strongly encouraged to provide evidence of negative COVID-19 PCR test result within 72 hours, or visitors will be required to take a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) prior to entry (please follow the direction given by each facility and note that RAT takes at least additional 30-45 minutes for the process to be completed. We appreciate your patient and cooperation to complete the additional screening for the protection of everyone in the facility).

For our updates during COVID-19, please visit our website www.anhf.org.au.

2. Appointments, outing or attending family gatherings

- Residents are permitted to leave the facility for medical appointments but must abide by the current [Public Health \(COVID-19 General\) Order 2021](#).
- Residents are required to receive a risk assessment by the Facility Manager who could advise the residents and their families' risk to leave the facility.
- **We strongly discourage any resident to attend a family gathering and return on the same night.**
- **Residents who want to leave the facility are requested to take social leave for no less than 10 days.** This is to facilitate the resident to take at least 3 Rapid Antigen Tests over the course of social leave to monitor they were not detected with COVID-19 prior to their return. Residents who return from their social leave should have a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) on days 2, 4 and 7 after they return. If well, residents do not need to isolate. If they develop any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 they should immediately be isolated and have a PCR test.
- Residents and the persons responsible for taking the resident out are reminded that they should ensure COVID Safe behaviours must be observed including practicing physical distancing (1.5m) and hand hygiene at all times.
- Facilities will ensure that residents are provided with appropriate personal protective equipment, infection control and mask wearing advice if they leave the facility. See the latest [face mask rules](#).
- If a person cannot wear a face mask because of a disability, physical or mental health illness or condition, they must carry either:
 - a medical certificate or letter signed by a registered health practitioner (such as a doctor) or a registered NDIS provider or
 - a statutory declaration.

3. Visitors must not enter the facility at all if they

- have [COVID-19 symptoms](#)
- are a close or [casual contact](#) of a person with confirmed COVID-19 unless they have completed their self-isolation and testing requirements. [Close contacts](#) should not enter high risk settings for at least 14 days since their exposure to a COVID-positive person.
- are waiting for a COVID-19 test result.
- have been overseas in the previous 14 days, unless they are:
 - fully vaccinated, it has been at least 7 days after arrival and they have received a negative rapid antigen test 6 days or later after arriving in NSW.

4. COVID-19 Outbreak - what to expect

- In the event of our residential aged care facilities have a COVID-19 outbreak or exposure, the facility management will conduct a risk assessment and take action accordingly to each group of people with high to low exposure risks. Public Health Unit will provide additional advice and guidance at the time.
- Affected residents and relatives will be contacted directly while other stakeholders will be notified in due course.
- Isolation and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) protocols and measures will be implemented.

- We will request all residents to stay in their own rooms. During this period, we will bring meals, drinks, medicines and therapy services to their rooms for a few days until the exposure risks are controlled.
- Additional surge workforce agency staff will be used through the Commonwealth COVID-19 support program to care for the residents. While we endeavour to request Chinese speaking staff, this has proven to be difficult though all surge workforce are trained carers.
- Regular COVID-19 testing will be carried out until the risk of outbreak is managed and an end of outbreak is declared by PHU.
- NSW Ministry of Health Aged Care Branch has endorsed the [Commonwealth Permissions and Restrictions Framework for Workers in Residential Aged Care Facilities – Interim Guidance](#). We follow this guidance in making decision for work restrictions or permission where there has been staff exposure to COVID-19.

5. [COVID-19 Booster Dose](#)

Free boosters are available to anyone 18 years and older who received their second dose at least 4 months ago. Residents and their person responsible for care will be informed by your facility / care manager when the government's immunisation team is coming to provide COVID-19 Booster Dose. Your consent will be obtained prior to the dose being given.

We strongly urge our residents' relatives to consider taking up the COVID-a9 booster dose. Please check when you received your second dose by looking at the date on your vaccination certificate. A booster vaccination can be booked through the [COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder](#).

Updates to Public Health Orders or other COVID-19 news

There have been several recent [updates](#) to Public Health Orders. More information on the [Public Health Orders and restrictions](#) is available.

Communication

We appreciate your understanding that we may have to proceed swiftly in response to the COVID-19 situation. We will use other means such as telephone call or SMS to contact you, in addition to email at times of urgency. Please do not hesitate to contact our Facility Managers if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Chua
General Manager, Care Services