



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 #44

Let me begin this letter with our sincere greeting to wish you a New Year of Tiger blessed with health and good fortune.

We would like to thank you for the cooperation and support you have provided to our nursing homes during these challenges past months.

Just to recap why we have to implement the restrictions on in-home visit and resident leaving facility in January

People aged 70 and over account for more than three quarters of all Australian deaths due to COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. Over 90% of the State's ICU admissions and deaths during the Omicron wave have not received three doses of a COVID vaccine.

While the Omicron infection had been peaking in the community in January, we have to guard the nursing home with caution in order to allow the residents to catch up with taking up their booster vaccines for better fight against the Omicron variant virus.

The good news

NSW's daily COVID-19 infections number has reduced by half in the past fortnight while hospitalisation number reduced by 25%. NSW Chief Health Officer Kerry Chant added a few days ago that there was "clear evidence of slowing the spread" with reductions in both the positivity rate in COVID-19 tests and the number of workers in furlough due to COVID-19.

As of today, we have had around 80% of our residents and 60% of our staff received the COVID-19 Booster Dose. The percentage of workers in furlough due to COVID-19 has reduced from January's 25% to about 5% currently.

Moreover, we have been able to secure adequate supply of additional PPE (N95 masks and face shield) to provide additional protection for residents and staff since mid-December. In addition, just before Christmas, we have commenced Rapid Antigen Testing for all staff and visitors entering the nursing homes.

All these preventative measures yielded results in protecting residents and staff from exposure to COVID-19 risk. Therefore we are now considering a staged relaxation of visiting requirements as we continue to encourage the residents and staff to take up the Booster vaccine.

What does this mean to you?

1. Visiting to Nursing Home

- From Monday 14/02/2022, residents and visitors who have had booster vaccination 14 days ago can resume visiting by booking.
- Visitors will be required to present evidence of Booster vaccination completed 14 days ago for staff inspection prior to entering the nursing home;
- All visitors must pass entry health screening including presenting a negative result from a PCR Test which was completed within 72 hours or take a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) outside the nursing home, and are compliant with PPE and visiting protocols.
- Visiting duration and visitor numbers are restricted by the booking schedule **for shared meeting venue** (unless obtained prior agreement from facility manager);
- All visitors must wear face mask and face shield **at all times during the visit** as directed by the facility staff inside the facility (therefore visitors are requested not to eat with the residents at the moment);
- Visit should occur in the resident's single room or facility designated area.
- Except for essential care or End-of-Life situations, each resident may have only one pre-booked visitor per day.
- For resident or visitor who have not received 3 doses of COVID-19 vaccines, 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 after risk assessment subject to the visitors' agreement to follow additional risk mitigation measures such as enhanced PPE (N95, Face Shield, Gown and Gloves).
- Please note that each nursing home may need to take swift response to newly identified exposure risks, the visiting conditions may change in short notice and vary from one nursing home to another.

2. Residents leaving the facility

- Residents can leave the facility except when the facility is in COVID-19 outbreak red lockdown.
- 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. For example, the risk of infection is higher for residents not received 3 doses of COVID-19 vaccines; or the risk of exposure is higher when multiple families are gathering indoor together without preventative measures such as mask wearing or RAT screening.
- Residents should not leave the facility if they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#) until they have had a RAT or PCR test and have received a negative result.

- Residents who are tested COVID-19 positive required permission from the Public Health Unit to leave the facility.
- Residents who live in shared rooms want to leave the facility are suggested to take social leave for at least 3 nights and obtained 2 consecutive negative RAT in the 48 hours prior to return to the nursing home.
- Residents who return from having left the nursing home will be required to do RAT daily for 6 days. If the resident has no symptom and the RAT is negative, s/he do not need to isolate. If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 or their RAT is positive, they would be required to be isolated immediately 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 Booster Dose](#)

Free boosters are available to anyone 18 years and older who received their second dose at least 3 months ago. Residents and their person responsible for care will be informed by your facility / care manager when the COVID-19 Booster Dose will be available on site. 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](#).

5. [Antiviral Treatment](#)

One of first oral treatments for COVID-19 in Australia, Molnupiravir (trade name Lagevrio®, MSD), has been provisionally approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) on 18 January 2022.

Lagevrio® (molnupiravir) can be effective in treating people with mild to moderate COVID19 who are within 5 days of displaying symptoms and who have a high risk of progressing to severe disease.

Currently this oral treatment is deemed suitable for people aged 60 and above, not completed the booster vaccine, or with immune suppressed or immune incompetent conditions.

Australian government has just delivered a small supply of this medication to our nursing home's emergency medication stock for the "just in case" situation.

The drug must be assessed by a GP over the suitability of this treatment and then prescribe prior to administration to a resident. Like all anti-viral treatment, Lagevrio® (molnupiravir) should be started within 5 days of symptom onset. Treatment after the initial 5 days of symptoms is not recommended.

Therefore, in the unfortunate event if any resident is confirmed with COVID-19, the resident's GP will be contacted immediately to assess if the commencement of this treatment is suitable. The resident and/or representative's consent will be obtained prior to the medication is being given.

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