

21 February 2022

Dear Residents and Relatives,

COVID-19 Update #45

As you must have heard from the news, the Government's [pandemic management measures](#) are relaxing with the clearly trending downward of COVID-19 transmissions in NSW. This is certainly a pleasing news to all of us.

Over the past weeks, the government has issued a number of updated guidelines to the aged care industry which we would like to explain how they may affect you.

1. Positive Rapid Antigen Test results

- From 12 January 2022, a person is legally required to register his/her positive rapid antigen test result through the Service NSW portal.
- Where a resident is unable to independently complete the information on the Service NSW portal, the Nursing Home would register the result on behalf of the resident.

2. Visiting to Nursing Home

- Residents are permitted to have two visitors aged 12 years and over, plus two children aged under 12 years per day.
 - Visitors aged 12 years and over must have received a second dose of a COVID vaccination at least 14 days prior to their visit.
 - Visitors are strongly encouraged to get a booster vaccine if they are eligible for one, and to have a negative Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) prior to each visit.
 - Up to 2 children under 12 years are permitted to visit provided they are accompanied by a fully vaccinated person.
 - Babies and toddlers under 3 years of age should not wear a mask as it is a choking hazard.
 - All nursing homes would continue to ensure residents are able to be visited by one [essential visitor](#) at all times. However after a risk assessment, the nursing home may choose to limit visitors to one visitor per day per resident and no children under twelve when COVID-19 is circulating in the local community. In these instances, we will continue to support residents to be visited outdoor; and 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.
- 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 at least a surgical mask over their nose and mouth or other PPE such as N95 mask and face shield as directed by the facility staff while visiting indoors (therefore visitors are requested not to eat with the residents at the moment). For reasons when masks can be removed please see [Additional Advice – Mandatory mask wearing](#);
- Visit should occur in the resident's single room or facility designated area. Wherever possible, the visit should be in an outdoor area. Visits should not be in any inside communal areas.
- Fire bridges, Ambulance staff and police are emergency service providers who are not classified as visitors and are not required to undertake a RAT prior to entry.
- People who are providing a service to the resident (including a health or other professional service) are not counted as a visitor.
- 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.

3. 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.
- 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 on the day of returning, and repeat RATs over the next 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.

4. **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.

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

Free boosters are available to anyone **16** 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-19 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](#).

6. [Antiviral Treatment](#)

Lagevrio® (molnupiravir) is one of the oral treatments for COVID-19 in Australia that has been deemed effective in treating people with mild to moderate COVID19.

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 delivered a small supply of Lagevrio® (molnupiravir) 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Chua', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jenny Chua
General Manager, Care Services