



Visiting Aged Care: metropolitan Melbourne

20 October 2020

Balancing safety and wellbeing

Based on expert public health advice, National and State Directions have been issued to restrict visitor access to aged care facilities. This is to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and protect residents, as older people are at higher risk of suffering severe illness or death if they contract the virus.

Facilities are required to take into account residents' physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing when implementing these restrictions.

Aged care facilities must also take reasonable steps to provide, and help residents to use alternative contact methods to communicate with people who cannot visit them, like phone and video calls.

It is acknowledged that alternative contact methods are not suitable for some residents, particularly those with sensory or cognitive impairment.

Visiting is allowed, including:

- Where a parent, guardian, partner, carer, or support person provides emotional, cultural, spiritual or social support that cannot reasonably be provided by electronic means or other non-contact means. Visits for this purpose are limited to one person each day, for up to two hours.
- Children under 16 are no longer excluded from visiting.
- Where a person provides essential care and support necessary for the resident's physical wellbeing or emotional cultural, spiritual or social wellbeing that cannot reasonably be provided by electronic means. This includes mental health support, or assistance with daily activities like eating meals, and must be to optimise the care and support delivered by workers at the facility. Visits for this purpose

are limited to one visitor at any one time (no time limit).

- Where a person acts as an interpreter or provides informal language support to enable the delivery of care by workers at the facility. Visits for this purpose are limited to one visitor at any one time (no time limit).
- To provide end of life support where the death of a resident is expected within days (periods up to 14 days) or where the resident is at risk of dying from a sudden acute event. Two visitors at any one time (no time limit).
- Where volunteers and advocates have a legislated role under the National Aged Care Advocacy Program and the Community Visitors Scheme.

A full copy of the care facilities directions can be found at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>

Example: Taylor Family

Mrs Taylor is receiving end of life treatment. She has a large family and is well-supported. The Director of Nursing helps coordinate a plan with the family representative also her immediate family to visit in her last days. Family members have coordinated visiting in pairs, ensuring she is not alone.

In the days before her passing all immediate family were able to visit.

You must not visit the facility if you:

- are not wearing a fitted face mask (unless an exception applies). A face shield on its own is not sufficient to meet the mask requirement.
- are unwell or have even the mildest symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19):
 - fever or temperature over 37.5 degrees C
 - loss or change in sense of smell or taste, chills or sweats, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath.

If you have any symptoms however mild you must get tested and isolate until your test results are known.

- have coronavirus (COVID-19) or have been in contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) within the last 14 days and you are currently required to isolate or quarantine
- have been tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) and have not yet received your result
- have arrived in Australia from overseas in the last 14 days.

Example: Rossi Family

Mrs Rossi provides meal assistance and emotional wellbeing support for her husband. Mr Rossi is lonely and lacks interest in eating alone. Electronic communication did not work.

Mrs Rossi assists her husband with lunch and dinner, staying onsite and providing support with meals and physical wellbeing. Mrs Rossi leaves before it gets dark. One day a week, their daughter visits for lunch and dinner, while Mrs Rossi stays at home and will facetime call and speak with them both during afternoon tea. Their daughter assists with the facetime iPad device, no staff assistance is required.

Visitors must:

- visit only the resident
- wear a fitted face mask (children over 12 should wear a mask, infants under two should never wear a mask)
- wear other PPE (personal protective equipment) as directed by staff and follow staff instructions
- maintain at least 1.5 metres physical distance from the resident and all other people in the facility for the duration of the visit. In cases where this may not be possible, for example when providing essential care and support such as assisting with eating, PPE may be required
- enter and leave the facility directly without spending time in communal areas
- perform hand hygiene before entering and after leaving the resident's room
- In whatever form the facility uses (e.g. an app or written document), declare that you:
 - are free of symptoms

- have not been in contact with a confirmed case in the previous 14 days (except in the course of your work and in appropriate PPE)
- are not currently required to isolate or quarantine.

It is recommended that visitors contact the facility before visiting to ensure they can safely accommodate your visit.

Visitors are encouraged to have an up-to-date influenza vaccination.

Where there is an active coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, facilities must implement strategies as needed to minimise risk to residents and staff based on public health advice.

This is difficult for residents and family members, but it is essential to keep everyone safe and slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Family and friends are encouraged to maintain contact with residents by phone and other social communication where possible.

Example: The Lim Family

Mr Lim receives a weekly visit from his son and daughter-in-law. Family did not want a telephone call as they wish to see and non-verbally communicate with Mr Lim who requires hearing aids, reading glasses and staff assistance to work the iPad and communicate with family.

A facetime video call is the only means available to the family at this time. During this call, staff provide time and assistance to support the weekly conversation. This weekly family time is now scheduled and available each week improving Mr Lim's emotional wellbeing and maintaining family connection.

Assistance for residents and visitors

In the first instance, concerns should be raised with the management of the facility.

If you are not comfortable to talk to the facility management directly, or you are not happy with their response, you can talk to the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) who have trained advocates who can provide advice and support to resolve concerns with the provider. OPAN can be contacted on 1800 700 600 or visit opan.com.au.

If this discussion does not resolve the matter, you can contact the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to make a complaint. The Commission can be contacted on their website agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint or on 1800 951 822 (toll free).

To find out more information about coronavirus and how to stay safe visit [DHHS.vic – coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus)

<<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>>

If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450

For information in other languages, scan the QR code or visit

[DHHS.vic –Translated resources - coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/translated-resources-coronavirus-disease-covid-19)

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For any questions

Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 (24 hours)

Please keep Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only

To receive this document in another format phone 1300 651 160 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email Emergency Management Communications <COVID-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au>](mailto:COVID-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

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Available at: [DHHS.vic – coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>>