COVID-19 novel coronavirus – Guidance for Residential Care Facilities

The international novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation is evolving rapidly, with local transmission reported in NSW.

Residents of residential aged care facilities are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection and are more vulnerable to serious complications if they do become infected.

Residential aged care facilities are responsible for establishing emergency plans in the event of disease outbreaks or broader community epidemics. Many facilities will have existing plans focused on influenza and gastroenteritis, and these can be built upon to prepare for COVID-19.

Key factors to consider when adapting emergency plans for COVID-19 include:

- Procedures to follow if an outbreak is suspected, including a method for seeking medical assessment and diagnosis
- Protocols to rapidly implement enhanced infection control measures
- Ensuring adequate and appropriate care is provided to the infected individual including isolation of the patient
- Maintaining adequate supplies of surgical gloves, masks, gowns and hand sanitiser
- Rapid notification for staff, families, carers, and your local public health unit.

General advice to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19 and other respiratory outbreaks (e.g. influenza)

- Discourage symptomatic visitors, even if minimal symptoms, from attending while unwell through communications and signage, and consider designating a single entrance for families and visitors
- Exclude sick staff members
- Encourage regular handwashing for residents, staff and visitors and provide hand sanitisers where this can be done safely
- Facilities should not have organized groups of children attend the facility at this time
- Monitor symptoms within the facility (residents and staff) and arrange testing as appropriate
- Contact your public health unit immediately on 1300 066 055 if three or more cases of ILI occur within 3 days, or if there is high suspicion of COVID-19 transmission.
- Promote the annual flu vaccine for residents and provide vaccine for staff.

Specific prevention advice for COVID-19 related to travellers and contacts

- Staff and visitors who have had contact with a confirmed case, or travelled to or transited through a higher risk country where COVID-19 is widespread must not attend the facility for 14 days from the time they left one of these countries or had contact with a case
- Staff and visitors who have travelled to other countries considered as moderate risk for COVID-19 can attend the facility but must monitor symptoms for 14 days from the time they left one of these countries and immediately leave the facility and seek medical attention if symptoms develop.
- Staff should regularly review this country list as the situation is rapidly changing.

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