COVID-19 novel coronavirus – information for residential care facility staff

What is the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?
COVID-19 is a new viral disease that recently started in mainland China. Cases have since been reported in many countries overseas and within Australia.

How is it spread?
The virus can be spread from person to person from infected people through coughing, sneezing or by germs on hands.

What are the symptoms?
Most patients have had fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Patients with more severe disease have had evidence of pneumonia (chest infection).

Who is at risk?
People who, in the past 14 days, have travelled to countries where COVID-19 infection considered at increased risk of transmission (see link below), or who have been in contact with a confirmed case.
The elderly and people with underlying medical conditions (such as diabetes, lung disease, kidney disease or supressed immunity) are at risk of severe illness or death if they are exposed to COVID-19.

How can I help protect the residents and myself?
There is no vaccine or treatment for people who are infected with COVID-19, so it is crucial that the disease is not introduced to aged care homes.
The best way to protect yourself and to prevent infections spreading in the facility is to wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand gel frequently – before and after touching residents, linen, or surfaces touched by others. When caring for residents with any flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or runny nose) wear gloves, a gown and a mask.

If you develop any flu-like symptoms, you should not attend the facility as you may infect residents and other staff. Stay home until you are well. Let your manager know about your symptoms and see your doctor if you are worried.

If you have travelled to countries at higher risk for COVID-19 you should not work for 14 days after you have left those countries. If you have been in other countries where COVID-19 is widespread you may work, but if you develop flu-like symptoms notify your manager immediately, isolate yourself and call your doctor to arrange testing.

Ensure you receive the 2020 seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as it is offered by your facility.

Further information