



Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck

Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians
Minister for Youth and Sport

16 March 2020

COVID-19 prevention guidelines issued to Aged Care providers

Residential aged care providers will be encouraged to limit visits from today under national guidelines aimed at the prevention and control of coronavirus.

Aged Care Minister Richard Colbeck said the advice from the Communicable Disease Network of Australia issued to aged care facilities around Australia outlines the precautionary measures for residents, staff and their families as the Federal Government continues to implement strategies to contain the virus.

It includes the recommendation that family and friends limit visits to residential care centres, particularly for residents already suffering from chronic illness.

“Given the risks to older Australians from COVID 19, particularly those with chronic disease and other frailties, we now recommend that residential aged care providers restrict visitor access,” Minister Colbeck said.

“Our plan is to slow the spread, to save lives.”

Minister Colbeck said he was aware of the emotional burden restrictions would have on families of residents in palliative care.

“We know that visitations are important and we will ensure that this is respected,” he said.

“The restrictions will be handled professionally and sensitively.

“All residential aged care facilities are required to have an infection control plan which can be activated in the circumstance of an infectious outbreak like Norovirus or influenza.

“Access restrictions are a normal part of those plans.”

The Health Department will continue to work with aged care peak bodies to finalise more detailed guidance developed by the Communicable Diseases Network (CDN) regarding visitor access, the management of non-compliant residents and physical distancing.

It follows the release of AHPPC recommendations for wider distancing measures.

Minister Colbeck said the measures are of most importance for people over 60, particularly those with chronic illness.

“COVID-19 can be much more serious, even fatal, for people who are more vulnerable,” he said.

The Minister said two forums and a webinar with specialist clinical infection control experts focused on primary care, aged care and in-home care had so far successfully outlined how providers could play their part of helping keep senior Australians safe.

“These discussions provided invaluable feedback from both sectors,” Minister Colbeck said.

The Chief Medical Officer has also written to the aged care sector with advice about preparedness to support aged care recipients.

It’s hoped the implementation of the guidelines will reinforce the Australian Government’s comprehensive \$2.4 billion health package which includes allocations to fund a new Medicare telehealth service, a dedicated COVID-19 national hotline, bulk-billed pathology tests within aged care facilities and infection control training for residential and in home aged care workers.

“Communication with the sector - and with each other - will remain key during this season of uncertainty,” Minister Colbeck said.

“We continue to encourage residents, staff and their families to practice good hygiene, act on advice as it becomes available and importantly, understand this situation will improve.”

Additional advice will be provided following further considerations by the CDN.

Fact sheets are available at the Department of Health’s [website](#) and will be updated as new information becomes available.

A 24-hour Coronavirus Health Information Line, run by healthdirect, has also been set up for public enquiries at 1800 020 080.

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