

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Information for Visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities

Visiting residential aged care facilities

This factsheet will help you understand the restrictions on visiting residential aged care facilities in South Australia, and how you can still keep in touch with your family and friends. These measures have been put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and keep vulnerable members of our community well.

Visiting restrictions

Due to COVID-19, the State Coordinator made a [Direction](#) under the *Emergency Management Act 2004* to limit entry into residential aged care facilities in South Australia.

These measures have been put in place as a precaution to ensure vulnerable older South Australians continue to remain safe from COVID-19. It is important that all visitors practice good hand hygiene, cough and sneeze into their elbow or a tissue, and maintain social distancing of 1.5 metres.

Prohibited to visit

Until further notice, you are not permitted to enter or remain on the premises of a residential aged care facility in South Australia if:

- > You have entered South Australia from any place other than the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, or the Australian Capital Territory in the last 14 days.
- > You have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days (unless adequate personal protective equipment was worn).
- > You have a fever (>38), or have a history of fever and chills in the past 72 hours, or symptoms of acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath) or loss of taste or smell.
- > You have undertaken a COVID-19 test and are awaiting the test result.
- > You have not been vaccinated against 2020 seasonal influenza, unless you have a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine (you will need a letter from your doctor to confirm this) or you are an infant aged 6 months or less.

Permitted to visit

Provided you do not fall into any of the prohibited categories listed above, you may visit a residential aged care facility for the following reasons:

- > You are providing care and support visit to a resident. This includes visits by a family member or friend providing social support to a resident, including children.

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- > You are an employee or contractor at the facility:
 - From 27 August 2020, personal care workers are not permitted to work at more than one residential aged care facility.
 - You must notify the aged care facility of any additional places of employment you may have, and also notify the aged care facility if you become aware of a COVID1-9 case identified at your additional place of employment.
- > You are a prospective resident (visiting with one support person).
- > You are providing goods or services necessary for the effective operation of the facility, or other professional services at the facility (such as hairdressing or advocacy).
- > You are providing health, medical or pharmaceutical services to a resident(s).
- > You are providing end of life support to a residents for whom death is imminent (likely within 2 weeks).
- > You are there for the purposes of emergency management or law enforcement, such a police, ambulance and fire services. In the event of an emergency, emergency services personnel may enter the facility regardless of any of the criteria listed in clause 5 of the Direction.
- > You are undertaking regulatory functions or duties, including inspections (e.g. a Regulatory Officer from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission).
- > You are a legal practitioner providing legal advice or services.
- > You are a volunteer who is providing:
 - care and support to a resident; or
 - services necessary for the effective operation of the aged care facility.

When you are visiting a resident, you must follow the guidance of the residential aged care facility, however, in general:

- > Care and support visits (for example, visits by family members and close friends) are limited to one visit per resident per day, by one person or two people visiting together.
 - Additional care and support visits may be approved by the operator of the aged care facility if appropriate or required under the circumstances.
- > Visits should usually occur in a resident's room, outdoors or in a specific area designated by the facility (not a communal space to reduce the risk of transmission).
- > Social distancing of 1.5 metres should be adhered to wherever possible.
- > If you are providing nursing, medical, allied health or personal care services to a resident, you must wear appropriate PPE when a distance of more than 1.5 meters between you and resident cannot be maintained. This does not apply to relatives providing care to their loved ones.

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Compassionate visits

Visits for the purpose of providing end of life support to a resident are permitted, including by children. Operators of residential aged care facilities have been asked to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place so that residents can still see their loved ones at this time.

- > In these circumstances, 'end of life' is defined as a person for whom death is imminent (likely within 2 weeks)
- > There is not limit on the number of people who can visit during this time, however, you must follow the processes put in place by the aged care facility to ensure risk to other residents is minimised.
- > Interstate visitors are permitted to visit an aged care facility within 14 days of entering South Australia for the purpose of providing end of life support to a resident. However, if you are visiting from Victoria or NSW you must:
 - o wear appropriate PPE at all times when you are on the premises of the of the aged care facility; and
 - o self-quarantine at all times when you are not visiting the facility.
- > **All interstate travellers must complete a cross border pre-approval form at least 14 days prior to arrival into South Australia.** This form is available online at: <https://www.police.sa.gov.au/online-services/cross-border-travel-application>.
- > If you are providing end of life support to a resident you will be permitted to visit if you have not yet received your flu vaccination, however, you must take all reasonable steps to get vaccinated as soon as practicable after your initial visit.

During your visit

- > Follow all instructions given by staff of the facility about how and when visits can take place.
- > Practice social distancing by keeping 1.5 metres between yourself and other people whenever possible.
- > Practice good hand hygiene – wash them regularly with soap and water or an alcohol based rub.
- > Practice proper coughing etiquette – cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue.

Information for residents and prospective residents

Leaving the facility

If you are a resident you are permitted to leave a residential aged care facility and then return, regardless of your reason for leaving.

- > When you return to the facility you will be screened for COVID-19, however, if you are assessed as low risk then there is no requirement for you to self-isolate for any period.

Prospective resident visits

If you are a prospective resident, you may visit a residential aged care facility for purpose of considering whether you will accept a place at that facility.

- > You are allowed to bring one other person with you for the visit.

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- > You are allowed to visit for a maximum of 2 hours.
- > You must hold a valid ACAT approval for residential aged care.

Flu vaccination requirements

From 1 May 2020, to visit a residential aged care facility in South Australia you must be vaccinated against seasonal influenza.

The only exemptions to this requirement are:

- > If you have a medical contraindication to the flu vaccine (such as a person who has a history of anaphylaxis or has had Guillain-Barré Syndrome following vaccination, or who is taking checkpoint inhibitor medication for cancer treatment).
 - o You will need to provide the aged care facility with a letter from a medical practitioner to confirm this before they will allow you to visit.
- > If you are providing emergency services in the event of an emergency.
- > Infants aged 6 months or younger.

Visitors will be asked to provide evidence of their immunisation status when visiting. Appropriate evidence may include a statement or record from a health practitioner, or an immunisation history statement available from Medicare online or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app.

If you have not been vaccinated against seasonal influenza, you may be offered a 'window visit' to stay in contact with your loved one. These visits are allowed in the following circumstances:

- > You must remain on the outdoor side of the closed window, with the resident to remain indoors.
- > Social distancing must be maintained at all times and there must be no contact with other visitors or staff on the premises.

While flu vaccination is highly encouraged for residents, if you are a resident of a residential aged care facility you have the right to refuse to be vaccinated.

Exemptions in exceptional circumstances

If you have a situation that you believe constitutes an exceptional circumstance, you can apply for an exemption by writing to the Department for Health and Wellbeing via officeforageingwell@sa.gov.au.

- > Include your contact details and any information relevant to the request, including the urgency of the situation.
- > Requests will be assessed by a prescribed authorised officer as soon as practicable and you will be advised of the outcome.

Note – The issue of flu vaccination has been considered and no exemptions other than those listed in the Direction will be granted.

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Staying in touch

Even if you cannot visit or you have to reduce the amount that you visit aged care facilities, you can still stay in touch with family and friends. This can include writing a letter, sending a postcard, talking over the phone, or video calling.

Further information

Visit the [Department of Health](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare) website for further information, advice and resources at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidagedcare.

For more information

Office for Ageing Well
Department for Health and Wellbeing
SA Health, Government of South Australia

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

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