

Infection Prevention and Control Residential aged care facilities

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Supply of PPE

- Supply of PPE to RACF is coordinated by the Commonwealth Department of Health (DoH)
- Aged care providers can request PPE by emailing agedcareCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au.
- The DoH assesses all requests and may ask for more information if needed - If your request is successful, the agreed PPE will be distributed to the RACF.
- Priority is given to aged care providers with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Standard and Transmission-based precautions

At a minimum, RACF staff must implement PPE (i.e. particulate filtered respirators (PFRs), surgical masks, gowns/apron, gloves, protective eyewear) in accordance with standard and transmission-based precautions (contact, droplet or airborne) as per the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) [Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare \(2019\)](#).

Refer to the specific [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for the health and aged care sector](#) webpage and [SA Health COVID advice](#).

Surgical mask use general principles

The use of surgical masks is intended to protect the wearer from exposure to droplets and can also act as barrier or “source control” to limit the expulsion of droplets from the wearer.

Surgical masks are worn by staff as part of [standard and transmission-based precautions \(droplet\)](#).

Surgical mask use by residents as “source control” may also be indicated in some situations for residents who are displaying signs and symptoms of respiratory illness or are suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 cases. This may be indicated particularly while staff are present in the affected resident’s room or the resident is leaving their room for transport to hospital or other clinical need. However surgical mask wearing by residents for “source control” must be risk assessed as medically appropriate and safe for the resident concerned – discuss this with the resident’s medical practitioner.

Particulate filtration respirators (PFRs) general principles

For advice relating to the use of PFRs in RACFs (e.g. aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) and aerosol generating behaviours (AGBs) refer to the current [Department of Health](#) advice as well as the current [SA Health PPE Matrix](#).

PFRs are not recommended for use by residents.

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PPE optimisation

As part of PPE optimisation, in some situations surgical masks or PFRs and protective eye wear, can be used as extended wear for multiple resident interactions without needing to remove or replace it between every interaction, as long as the mask/PFR does not come in direct contact with residents or is not compromised in any way. Refer to: [SA Health COVID-19 Strategies for optimising supply of PPE](#).

- If undertaking PPE optimisation including extended wear of surgical masks or PFRs, care must be taken not to touch the front of the mask/PFR once it is *in situ* on the worker's face.
- If the mask/PFR needs to be adjusted during wear, it must be removed, hand hygiene performed and a new mask/PFR donned.
- Any item of PPE must be inspected for integrity and signs of deterioration (e.g. tears, damaged surfaces, dampness etc.) upon donning and during use for each resident interaction (if undertaking extended use).

Surgical masks and PFRs that are damaged or compromised are no longer fit for purpose and must be discarded, refer to SA Health [COVID-19 strategies for optimising supply of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) guideline.

Further information

For further information on all PPE requirements refer to the SA Health [Infection control and personal protective equipment \(PPE\) advice](#) webpage.

For information relating to restrictions and management of COVID-19 in residential aged care facilities, refer to the SA Health [Aged Care Restrictions](#) web page.

For more information

**Infection Control Service
Communicable Disease Control Branch**
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

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