

Information for visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities

Visiting residential aged care facilities

This factsheet will help you understand the requirements for visiting residential aged care facilities (RACF) in South Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 RACF 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.

Visits by family and friends

Currently, visits for the purpose of providing care and support to a resident (e.g. family and friends) are limited to a maximum of two visitors per day in RACF where less than 70% of residents have received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This may be two visits of one person each time, or one visit or two people together.

RACF with 70% or more of residents vaccinated against COVID-19 (with at least a first dose) are not impacted by these visitor restrictions and there are no restrictions on either the number of visitors a resident may receive or the duration visits.

Prior to visiting, family and friends are encouraged to contact the RACF to confirm any limitations for that facility.

Other people permitted to visit

- > People undertaking prospective resident visits.
- > People providing goods or services necessary for the effective operation of the facility, or other professional services at the facility (such as hairdressing or advocacy).
- > People providing health, medical or pharmaceutical services to a resident.
- > Emergency management and law enforcement personnel.
- > Legal practitioner providing legal advice or services.
- > People undertaking regulatory functions or duties, including officers from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission undertaking inspections.
- > People participating in a group activity led or supervised by an employee, contractor, student or volunteer of the facility.

Information for visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities

Prohibited visitors

Until further notice, you are not permitted to enter or remain on the premises of a RACF in SA if:

- > You were not in a restricted zone in the past 14 days, including from overseas.
 - You can find up-to-date advice about travel restrictions in the Cross Border Travel Direction: www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/emergency-declarations/cross-border-travel.
 - In the event of COVID-19 outbreaks interstate, people coming from particular restricted zone may be prohibited from visiting or have additional restrictions placed upon them when visiting a RACF in SA. For information on restricted and prohibited locations, visit www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/restrictions-and-responsibilities/travel-restrictions.
- > 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 or diarrhoea and vomiting.
- > You have undertaken a COVID-19 test and are awaiting the test result, unless the person submitted to the COVID-19 test in accordance with routine surveillance.
- > You have not been vaccinated against seasonal influenza.
- > You have not been vaccinated against COVID-19 (from 6 December 2021).
- > You have worked or engaged at a medi-hotel site in the last 14 days.

Undertaking visits safely

The RACF is responsible for putting processes in place to ensure that residents are able to receive visitors safely. You must follow the instructions given by staff about how and when visits can take place.

- > A person (other than a resident or a child under 12 years) must not enter or remain on the premises of a RACF, unless the person is **wearing a face mask** (covering mouth and nose) at all times when in the physical presence of other persons. The requirement for a mask does not apply:
 - when the person is eating or drinking;
 - the wearing of a mask will hinder the provision of the relevant care and/or impact resident safety or wellbeing;
 - by a person who has a relevant medical condition, including problems with their breathing, a serious condition of the face, a disability or a mental health condition; or
 - in circumstances where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication, such as to enable communication by or with any person who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- > Anyone entering a RACF, including employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors, must use [COVID SAfe Check-In](#) (QR Code) to capture their relevant contact details. If they are not able to use the COVID Safe Check-In, they must sign in using a paper record.
- > All visitors will be screened upon entry to ensure they do not fall within any of the prohibited categories.

Information for visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities

- > Visitors should adhere to physical distancing of 1.5m wherever possible, particularly in communal areas being used by other residents, staff and visitors.
- > Practice good hand hygiene – wash regularly with soap and water or an alcohol based rub.
- > Practice proper coughing etiquette – cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue.
- > Any person providing care to a resident who has undertaken a COVID-19 test must wear appropriate PPE when providing care to that resident until the test result is known.

Compassionate visits

Visits for the purpose of providing end of life support are permitted, including by children. Operators of residential aged care facilities have been asked to take particular care to balance the need to protect residents, staff and others from the risk of transmission of COVID-19, while supporting the rights and wellbeing of residents and their families.

- > In these circumstances, 'end of life' is defined as a person for whom death is imminent (likely within 2 weeks)
- > There is no limit on the number of people who can visit during this time, however, you must follow the processes put in place by the RACF to ensure risk to other residents is minimised.
- > Visitors from any place other than a low community transmission zone in the last 14 days, or overseas are permitted to visit a RACF within 14 days of entering SA for the purpose of providing end of life support to a resident. These visitors must:
 - o wear appropriate PPE at all times; and
 - o provide written evidence of a negative COVID-19 test.
- > All travellers coming to SA are required to complete a Cross-Border Travel Registration.
 - o For more information about cross-border travel or to complete an online application form, visit 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.

Flu vaccination requirements

From 1 June 2021, you must be vaccinated against 2021 seasonal influenza in order to visit a RACF in SA.

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 check point inhibitor medication for cancer treatment).
 - o You will need to provide the RACF with a letter from a medical practitioner to confirm this before they will allow you to visit.
- > If you are observing the recommended 7 day waiting period between receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine
 - o You will need to provide evidence of the date of receipt of a COVID-19 vaccination to the RACF and take all reasonable steps to ensure you are vaccinated as soon as is

Information for visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities

reasonably practicable following the preferred minimum interval of 7 days between administration of the COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine.

- > If all reasonable steps have been taken to access the flu vaccine and it is not reasonably available.
- > 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.

COVID-19 vaccination requirements

From 6 December 2021, you must be vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to visit a RACF in SA. To be vaccinated, you must have received at least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the TGA or all dosages of a recognised COVID-19 vaccine in accordance with dosage schedule recommended by ATAGI for that vaccine.

The only exemptions to this requirement are:

- > the person has a medical certificate or letter from a legally qualified medical practitioner certifying that the person:
 - has a medical exemption from receiving a TGA approved COVID-19 vaccine on either a permanent or temporary basis in accordance with the guidelines published from time to time by ATAGI; or
 - has a medical exemption on either a permanent or temporary basis from receiving the preferred vaccine as recommended by ATAGI for the person's age; or
 - has an appointment to be assessed by a medical specialist or has commenced an assessment with a medical specialist to determine whether they have a medical exemption from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine on either a permanent or temporary basis in accordance with the guidelines published from time to time by ATAGI; or
 - is currently taking part in a COVID-19 vaccine trial and receipt of a TGA approved vaccine would impact the validity of the trial.
 - **The certificate or letter must clearly outline the reason for the exemption and the exemption must be endorsed by the Chief Public Health Officer or her delegate (which must be provided to the operator of the RACF).**
- > the person is aged 12 years and 2 months or less.

If you have not been vaccinated against seasonal influenza or COVID-19, 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 and COVID-19 vaccination is highly encouraged for residents, residents of a RACF have the right to refuse to be vaccinated.

Information for visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities

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.

Flu and COVID-19 vaccination exemptions have been considered and no exemptions other than those listed in the Direction will be granted.

Declared outbreaks in RACF: Self-quarantine period

If a single confirmed case of COVID-19 is detected in a resident, staff member or frequent attendee of a RACF, a COVID-19 outbreak will be declared at that facility.

In the event of a COVID-19 outbreak, a prescribed authorised officer may declare a prescribed self-quarantine period in relation to the RACF, ending at the time declared by the prescribed authorised officer.

During a prescribed self-quarantine period, residents are prohibited from leaving the RACF, except in the following circumstances:

- > for urgent medical or dental treatment; or
- > for transfer to hospital; or
- > for transfer to another RACF determined to be suitable by an authorised officer; or
- > in order to self-quarantine at another location, including a family home, approved by an authorised officer.

Note: *nothing in the Direction authorises the provision of treatment of a resident that is contrary to a relevant Advanced Care Directive.*

If a resident is approved to leave the RACF to self-quarantine at a family home or other suitable location during a prescribed self-quarantine period, others residing at that location who are deemed close contacts will also be required to quarantine.

A close contact with another person occurs if they are in the company of the other person:

- > within an enclosed space for a period of more than 2 hours
- > within 1.5m of the other person for a period more than 15 minutes.

Information for visitors to Residential Aged Care Facilities

Staying in touch

It is important to stay in regular touch with family and friends in residential aged care. In addition to visiting, this can include writing a letter, sending a postcard, talking over the phone, or video calling.

Further information

For information, advice and resources, visit 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/covidagedcare

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