

Dear Residents, family members and responsible others,

It has been some time since I last updated you all. While I await the State Government COVID-19 update, I thought I would touch base about where we are up to with visiting, managing COVID-19, FLU vaccination, RATs testing, wearing of Masks, Easter Visiting & Resident Outings, COVID Booster update and Accreditation.

Visiting

Visiting will remain as per my last email dated Feb 4 2022. The reason for not opening up any further at this time, is due to the emergence of the new Omicron BA.2 (and in China BA.1.1 & the UK XE variant) strain and the unknown associated with that.

Below lists the details of the current and ongoing visiting arrangements until further notice:

- A maximum number of up to 4 nominated visitors are allowed per day. A resident or decision maker can nominate who visits.
- Please limit visits to 1 hour.
- You do not need to call to book a visit.
- Please maintain physical distancing from other residents, family and staff. ie; Please visit only 1 nominated Resident.
- Visitors must wear a mask at all times, practice hand hygiene and carefully sign in and out.
- Where possible, please visit in the residents room and in outdoor courtyards. If the resident is not in their room, please present to admin and they will locate the resident on your behalf.
- If families would like to drop things off, please do so via reception, rather than enter the home.
- Facetime and phone calls will continue. Please call Longridge during business hours to book the Facetime calls.

COVID-19 Omicron BA.2

The new BA.2 is even more transmissible than the BA.1. Putting BA.2 into perspective means that it is two to three times more likely to spread as Delta. China have also detected another strain of Omicron the BA.1.1 while in the UK the XE variant has emerged. At this stage it is a *watch and see how* these new variants will impact us here at Longridge.

Flu Vaccination

It is flu season again! Flu vaccinations will be administered here onsite at Longridge over the next few weeks (probably the end of April). *If you do not wish your loved one to have the Flu vaccination, please let us know as soon as possible.*

COVID-19 booster

COVID-19 vaccination Winter dose is voluntary but strongly encouraged for residents in aged care facilities. The Government states that "It remains the most effective protection against severe illness, hospitalisation and death from COVID-19". The expert Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends an additional COVID-19 vaccine dose for residents in aged care facilities before winter. This is not mandatory however if you would prefer that your *loved one does not receive the second booster, please let us know.*

Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT)

Due to the ongoing risk of the COVID-19 infection to the residents of Longridge, commencing immediately, RATs testing to screen visitors who do not have symptoms of COVID-19. (Staff currently test, at minimum, three times a week and volunteers self-test every time they enter Longridge) You will be asked on arrival if you have had a negative RATs test in the last 72 hours? *Please talk to staff if you are having issues accessing RATs tests.*

Wearing Masks

As you all know, mask wearing in Aged Care facilities has been mandatory for some time now and will continue until further notice. "Under the RACF Emergency Management Direction, all visitors (over the age of 12) must wear a face mask covering their mouth and nose at all times while visiting at the RACF". I realise the Government will be easing restrictions on mask wearing this coming Thursday, it is *highly* unlikely that this will apply to Aged Care and those working, volunteering or visiting.

Easter Visiting & Resident Outings

Just a gentle reminder to please let the Admin staff know if you are intending to take your loved one out over the Easter period. As you know, this will enable staff to let the kitchen know and also the Clinical team should the person require medication etc.

Accreditation

In Australia, residential aged care services are required to be accredited to receive Australian Government subsidies. Accreditation involves periodic full audits to assess compliance with the Quality Standards. In addition, the Commission monitors the quality of care and services and manages any non-compliance with the Quality Standards.

As I have mentioned previously, our accreditation comes to an end in May this year. The Government has though let us know that the current Accreditation will remain in place until a new one has been conducted. I have attached the Notice of Assessment form for your perusal which gives you details of how to contact the Commission should you wish to provide information/feedback for the audit.

Even though a visit is unannounced, we thought that they may have conducted a site audit prior to April. But like everyone else in the Aged Care sector, staffing is an issue!

From us all here at Longridge, we wish you and your family a very happy Easter.

Kind regards,

Mary-Ann Koerner
CEO