



Australian Government

Department of Health and Aged Care

COVID-19 and flu outbreak information for families and carers of aged care residents

Dear families and carers,

I am writing to let you know about a recent rise in COVID-19 and flu cases in aged care. There is an urgent need for older people to get regular COVID-19 and flu vaccinations. We understand and appreciate all you do to support the people you care for. Your influence and support are key to protecting the health and wellbeing of your loved ones.

The Chief Medical Officer still recommends regular vaccination against COVID-19 and the flu. Vaccines are the best way to protect people from serious illness and having to go into hospital.

Why vaccines are important

The emergency stage of the pandemic is behind us, but we still need to be careful and respond to increasing risks. Vaccination rates in aged care are too low, especially for COVID-19. Recently, COVID-19, the flu and other respiratory virus cases are increasing across the country.

Vaccines are still the best way to reduce the risk to older people from these viruses. Older people who are vaccinated are:

- more likely to survive the virus
- less likely to have serious illness and need to go into hospital because of the virus.

It is important that you and the older person you care for, talk to their doctor or primary care giver about vaccines and advance care planning.

How to arrange the vaccinations

Doctors and pharmacists provide most vaccinations in aged care homes. You can ask a staff member to arrange this service, COVID-19 and flu vaccines can be taken on the same day.

Aged care providers must make sure people in aged care can get the recommended vaccines as soon as they need them. We recently wrote to all providers to remind them they are responsible for this.

COVID-19 vaccines are free for everyone. Flu vaccines are free for people aged 65 years or over.

How often to get a COVID-19 vaccination

A COVID-19 vaccination is recommended:

- every 12 months for people over 65
- every 6 months for people over 75, or who have a weaker immune system because of a health condition or medication.

People no longer have to wait for 6 months after a COVID-19 illness to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

More information about COVID-19 vaccines

For more information on COVID-19 vaccines, visit the Department of Health and Aged Care website: www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/is-it-true

It has facts about safety and how well the vaccines work.

You can also free call 1800 020 103, or write to Department of Health and Aged Care, GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia. We can mail out this information.

Oral antiviral treatments for COVID-19

Quick access to oral antiviral treatments helps stop someone becoming very sick from COVID-19. It also reduces the risk of needing to go into hospital and dying from COVID-19. You can read more about the difference oral antivirals can make on the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission website:

<https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/oral-antiviral-treatments-covid-19-and-influenza-viruses-residential-aged-care-services>.

People must take oral antivirals within 5 days of symptoms starting. We urge aged care residents to talk to their doctor to give early consent to using these medicines. This will help make sure they get access to treatment quickly when they need it.

Ongoing care and attention is key to managing the risks of COVID-19 and the flu. We thank you for your support to protect older people living in aged care homes.

Yours sincerely



Michael Lye
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Ageing and Aged Care Group
Department of Health and Aged Care
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To use the National Relay Service, visit nrschat.nrscall.gov.au/nrs to choose an access point on their website. Or call the NRS Helpdesk on 1800 555 660.