



COVID-19 SAFE FESTIVE SEASON 2020 GUIDANCE FOR RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES

Purpose

Residents of residential aged care facilities are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection and are more vulnerable to serious complications if they do become infected. As there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, avoidance of exposure is the single most important measure for preventing COVID-19 in this setting.

All people in NSW should be able to enjoy the festive season in their own way and have opportunities to spend time with their loved ones.

This joint guidance developed by NSW Health, Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA) and Leading Age Services Australia (LASA), provides some tips and reminders for residential aged care providers when holding events and activities over the festive season for residents in their facility.

Being prepared means your facility and residents can enjoy this time, while remaining COVID Safe.

Important!

At the time of writing, NSW is experiencing very low cases of community transmission.

NSW Health will continue to issue regular guidance to residential aged care facilities when circumstances change. If there is a higher level of community transmission in NSW, further restrictions may be implemented to keep people safe.

Please ensure over the festive season that your facility has processes in place to stay up to date on the most recent advice, by visiting <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/aged-care.aspx>.

All advice outlined in this guidance document must be followed in line with relevant NSW Public Health Orders. As always, if a resident or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19 over the festive season, they should self-isolate and get tested immediately.

COVID-19 safe tips over the festive season

Entering the facility and screening requirements

All visitors must adhere to the usual entry and screening requirements. Exclude any visitors who:

- Have a fever (37.5 degrees Celsius or higher) or any symptoms of COVID-19 infection, even if mild
- Have had a COVID-19 test and are waiting on the test result
- During the last 14 days have been:
 - Identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case
 - In any of the locations on the self-isolate and get tested immediately list (at the times and dates listed), available here <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates#self-isolate-and-get-tested-immediately-if-youve-been-to-these-locations>
 - In any of the locations on the monitor for symptoms list (at the times and dates listed except where noted otherwise), available here <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates#monitor-for-symptoms-if-youve-been-to-these-locations>

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- o In a location of interest in South Australia at the times and dates listed (note: this advice is current as at 8 December 2020, the most up to date advice is available here <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/racf-latest-advice.aspx>)

Records of all guests, staff and volunteers entering your facility must be kept, and include contact details, dates and times they were at the facility.

Remember:

- Loved ones are not limited in the time that they spend with their spouse/relative, unless the activity is in a communal area of the facility (the minimum visiting time of 60 minutes outlined in the Industry Code is recommended in these instances)
- Under the current Public Health Order, residents can have a maximum of two visitors at any one time. However, this requirement is being reviewed and may change from 18 December 2020 – please ensure you read the requirements set out in the revised Public Health Order when released.
- Children of all ages can enter a residential aged care facility.

Physical distancing

Physical distancing is important to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Residential aged care facilities should have a plan for physical distancing during a festive season event. It is important to reduce the potential for crowding and the risk of environmental contamination in the facility.

Facilities should ensure that visitors stay within their groups, limit physical movement around the facility, and that there is at least 1.5 metres (minimum) space between groups. Facilities should also avoid activities that require queuing (or consider using floor markers).

Where physical distancing is not possible, facilities should make plans to spread the event over more than one occasion, reduce the number of visitors to the event, and utilise outdoor locations of the premises.

Hygiene and infection control

As with usual entry requirements, all visitors must follow hand hygiene processes.

It is especially important during the festive season to provide regular reminders, by ensuring that hand sanitizers are located at appropriate locations, that you have adequate stocks of hand sanitizers, soap, hot water and paper towels, and signage is displayed.

If your facility plans on holding an event/s, please ensure:

- High touch surfaces are wiped down throughout the event and other shared spaces (e.g. toilets) are regularly cleaned
- Consider games and activities that involve use of a person's own equipment to minimise cross-contamination
- Plan for enhanced cleaning after the event.

Holding an event

Facilities may hold an event like a musical or other performance such as choirs, carol singers or musicians. For the festive season, these events are to be considered a welfare and wellbeing visit. Facilities must consider the following:

- Performers are subject to entry and screening requirements, and physical distancing requirements, and these are communicated to them in advance
- Allow your staff enough time to effectively undertake the entry and screening process
- Discourage indoor events and activities, but encourage outdoor events and activities in line with physical distancing requirements
- Consider holding several smaller events for safe physical distancing or offer alternative options for residents to participate such as video streaming from a residents' rooms.

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Meals

Facilities need to take steps to reduce cross-contamination during meal times. These include:

- Minimising shared implements, utensils or condiments
- Avoiding shared platters, and using plated or boxed meals instead
- Ensure physical distancing between groups in communal areas – prioritise outdoor dining options and consider holding the event on different days and times
- Consider minimising groups from different households seated together.

Individual outings and group excursions

Residents can leave the facility to attend small family gatherings and group excursions organised by the facility, as outlined in existing NSW Health advice:

- Outings should be planned to take outdoors as much as possible. However, with the hot weather in the coming months, a safe outing to a well-ventilated, open-plan indoor environment is also acceptable.

- Avoid planning outings to areas with increased testing
- Residents should wear face masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained, including on shared transport (where possible)
- Facilities should maintain a record of the visit location, number of people in the gathering and the date of the visit
- Families of residents should also consider advice here when taking their loved ones out of the facility to attend small family gatherings.

There is no requirement for COVID-19 testing or self-isolation for residents on return to the facility from an outing, unless they develop signs or symptoms of COVID-19.



We wish you a safe and enjoyable festive period