

17 April 2020

Dear Residents and Relatives

Coronavirus and Influenza Vaccination Update

We thought it was time for an update, even though the media has saturated us every day since COVID-19 began!

It appears that the measures put into place by our state and federal governments around good hygiene and social distancing practices are having the desired effect. West Wimmera Health Service's early lockdown of residential aged care facilities has also worked well in terms of there being no confirmed cases of the 'flu in any of our homes to date.

We hope that you have been enjoying the additional activities offered at your home and that you have been given the assistance you require to maintain contact with your loved ones. Please let staff know if you need help to do this and we will do everything we reasonably can to assist.

Residents and staff are being provided with free flu vaccinations again this year, and this program is rolling out in earnest as we speak.

Further, the Commonwealth Government recently made it **mandatory for all staff and visitors to residential aged care facilities to also have a flu vaccination with effect from 1 May 2020**. Please find attached an information fact sheet in relation to this directive.

Obviously for now with no visitors permitted to our facilities this will not be an issue for them, however, once the lockdowns are lifted every person wishing to enter any of our aged care facilities must have had a 'flu vaccination for them to be able to do so.

Our homes will require evidence that visitors have had a flu vaccination, so please when you do receive your vaccination be sure to obtain written evidence from the person who administered it i.e. doctor, pharmacist, nurse. This will allow us to show that we are continuing to comply with all of the rules and regulations necessary for us to safely and effectively operate our residential aged care services.

Thank you for your ongoing patience and understanding during what is a very challenging time for everyone and again if there is anything at all we can do for you please let us know.

Yours sincerely



Jan Fisher
Executive Director of Clinical Services



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Influenza vaccination advice for residential aged care staff and visitors

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update 8 April 2020

Who should read this?

This factsheet is for residential aged care providers, staff and visitors, including health practitioners and volunteers.

Flu vaccinations now matter more than ever. We encourage everyone to take every possible step to help stop the spread of flu this winter and protect our health system.

Influenza vaccinations for staff and visitors in aged care services

All people attending a residential aged care service, other than residents, must now have an up to date influenza vaccination (if such a vaccination is available to them) in order to be present on the premises.

Aged care providers are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that these directions are being followed and a person does not enter or remain on the premises if they do not meet the influenza vaccination requirements. There are penalties that apply for the individual and for businesses that do not comply.

This advice is consistent with the directives issued by the Chief Health Officer of Victoria and his delegates on 7 April 2020 in accordance with the declared a state of emergency throughout the State of Victoria due to the serious risk to public health in Victoria from coronavirus (COVID-19).

Can staff who are unable to have an influenza vaccination continue to work in residential aged care services during the state of emergency?

Yes, staff who are unable to have an influenza vaccination can continue to work in a residential aged care service during this period. They are required to provide evidence from a medical practitioner as to the reason they are unable to have the vaccination. However, services may consider whether they wish to deploy these staff elsewhere during this period.

Can staff who choose not to have an influenza vaccination continue to work in residential aged care services during the state of emergency?

No. Staff who choose not to have an influenza vaccination are not able to work in a residential aged care service during this period.

Can visitors who are unable to have an influenza vaccination, attend a residential aged care service during the state of emergency?

Yes. Visitors who unable to have an influenza vaccination due to medical reasons can visit; however, they are required to provide evidence, from a medical practitioner, as to the reason they cannot have the vaccination. Services should encourage visitors who cannot have an influenza vaccination to only visit for compassionate reasons.

Can visitors who provide support and care, who choose not to have an influenza vaccination attend a RACS during the state of emergency?

No. Visitors who choose not to have an influenza vaccination are not able to visit a residential aged care service during this period.

What is the responsibility of the residential aged care service provider during an emergency to assess an emergency responder or law enforcer's influenza vaccination status?

The residential aged care service should:

- check whether the responders have an up to date influenza vaccination as soon as is practicable
- take all reasonable steps to ensure any emergency responders or law enforcers who attend a residential care service for an emergency, who do not have an up to date influenza vaccination must only remain on the premise for no longer than is necessary to manage the initial emergency response.

Commonwealth advice about influenza vaccinations for staff

The Commonwealth Department of Health emailed an Aged Care Update to the sector on 27 March 2020, noting that:

- Staff should seek to have their annual vaccination against influenza, as soon as it is then available
- Residential aged care services should document that evidence of influenza immunisation status was requested and provided from all visitors and staff entering the facility. Appropriate evidence might include:
 - a statement or record from a health practitioner or
 - an immunisation history statement from Medicare online or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app.
- Residential aged care services should also maintain records to substantiate compliance with this requirement
- Staff who cannot be vaccinated may need to be redeployed to areas of work other than a residential aged care service.

Where can I get more information?

The Victorian and Commonwealth governments have developed coronavirus (COVID-19) aged care specific websites with resources and guidelines.

The situation and action required is changing rapidly. We recommend you regularly check these websites, and subscribe to updates:

Department of Health and Human Services (Victoria)

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/aged-care-sector-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-update>

Department of Health (Commonwealth)

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/advice-for-people-at-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-in-aged-care-facilities>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts>