



Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

COVID-19 vaccinations ahead of the festive season

Dear Aged Care Providers,

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to delivering safe, quality care to older Australians.

Older age is still the biggest risk factor for severe COVID-19. Over the festive season there will be an increase in travel and visits from family and friends to your homes. This often leads to a rise in COVID-19 cases amongst staff and residents. It is important to take steps to protect those in your care. Regular COVID-19 vaccinations help to prevent serious illness and unnecessary hospitalisations among aged care residents.

Vaccination rates are low so we need to act now.

Residential aged care homes are responsible for facilitating timely access to vaccinations for their residents. You should be having discussions with residents, their families and loved ones promoting the benefits of receiving regular COVID-19 vaccinations.

General Practitioners and pharmacists primarily administer COVID-19 vaccines in residential aged care homes, with funding available for these services. If you don't have an existing relationship with a GP or pharmacist, we encourage you to engage with your Primary Health Network (PHN) for assistance.

If you need further information or help with booking a clinic, email RACFVaccineClinics@health.gov.au.

COVID-19 vaccinations are free and recommended every 12 months for people aged 65 and over, and every 6 months for those aged 75 and over or adults with severe immunocompromise. There is no need to wait 6 months after a previous COVID-19 infection to receive a vaccine. In addition, it is important to remember that verbal or written [consent](#) for vaccinations is considered acceptable and should be documented by the vaccination provider as per standard practice.

The Department of Health and Aged Care is working with homes to improve vaccination rates and [publishes monthly updates on its website](#).



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Effective medications are available for those at greatest risk of severe illness. Early access to [oral antivirals](#) can save lives, so it is important to plan ahead. Discussions about advanced consent and assessment with residents, families and primary care teams will improve rapid access to medication if and when required.

In addition to vaccinations and antivirals, maintaining robust infection prevention and control (IPC) measures is essential. This includes regular hand hygiene, use of personal protective equipment and ensuring proper cleaning and disinfection protocols are followed. These measures help minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission within aged care homes.

The [Aged Care IPC Guide](#), released in August 2024, provides guidance on how to implement effective IPC strategies and protect older people and staff from infections.

Following the festive season, it is strongly recommended that you start planning for 2025 vaccination clinics, ahead of winter. It is important that essential vaccinations are delivered ahead of winter to ensure residents have the best protection during the winter months.

It is recommended that all aged care homes hold a vaccination clinic at least every 6 months to ensure residents receive timely COVID-19 vaccinations and annually for influenza vaccinations. Administering COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the same time is safe, improves uptake of each vaccine and increases protection against both diseases.

Thank you once again for your commitment to the health and well-being of our aged care residents.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Lye'.

Michael Lye
Deputy Secretary
Ageing and Aged Care Group

6 November 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A J McMillan'.

Professor Alison J McMillan PSM
Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer

6 November 2024