Alert Level 1 guidance for aged residential care facilities

17 June 2020

At Alert Level 1, the risk of community exposure to COVID-19 is now very low. There is no evidence of residual community transmission after widespread symptomatic and surveillance testing.

With the exception of border controls, there are no restrictions on movement and businesses and services are all open. COVID-19 is still uncontrolled overseas so it’s important we remain vigilant. We must continue to do the best we can to protect older people and residents in aged residential care (ARC) facilities who are vulnerable to severe illness from COVID-19.

Public health measures

Public health measures underpin the alert level framework. Along with general health advice focussed on personal hygiene and sanitation, the measures include contact tracing, testing, isolation and quarantine and border restrictions.

At Alert Level 1, ARC facilities should continue following public health measures and PPE guidance.

Facilities should have signs at the entrance to encourage visitors and staff to follow public health advice:

- basic hygiene measures (hand hygiene, cough and sneeze etiquette and avoiding touching face)
- keeping a record for contact tracing purpose. Facilities can enable contact tracing by obtaining and displaying QR codes so people can use the NZ COVID Tracer app.

Staff and visitors should stay at home if unwell and call their general practitioner or Healthline (for free) on 0800 358 5453 if they have COVID-19 symptoms.

Testing

COVID-19 testing is conducted in accordance with the case definition. There is more information about the case definition available on the Ministry of Health website.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE should be used correctly and safely in accordance with the Ministry of Health guidance for health and disability care settings.

Following the risk assessment questions when a person’s COVID-19 status is unknown will help determine the type of PPE to use, if any. Risk assessments include checking if visitors/attendees/staff are or have been unwell, or if they have recently been in contact with someone who has been unwell.

The Ministry of Health is continually reviewing advice and guidance on the use of PPE. Read more about the risk assessment questions, the latest advice on PPE and its use in different health care settings, and frequently asked questions about PPE and COVID-19 at www.health.govt.nz/ppe-health.
ARC Care services/activities

Aged residential care facilities will operate at their full scope and follow Alert Level 1 public health measures.

Care services/activities that had restrictions in place at Alert Levels 2, 3 and 4 will all resume business as usual processes:

- **Admissions:**
  - 14-day isolation is **not** required.

- **Visiting:**
  - A record of all visitors into the facility should be kept.
  - Visitors should stay at home if they are unwell, under investigation of COVID-19 or a close contact of someone who is a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case.
  - Visitors must follow the Ministry of Health’s and the facility’s IPC measures, for example hand hygiene and appropriate use of PPE as required based on risk assessment.

- **All respite care is available.**

- **Outpatient/medical appointments:**
  - All outpatients and medical appointment services are operating.
  - Virtual consultations remain an option at Alert Level 1.

- **Resident’s family/other outings, day programmes, health promotion activities and other community supports in the community and ARC facilities will resume:**
  - No restrictions on gatherings.
  - A record of where residents have been should be kept for contact tracing purposes.
  - People shouldn’t go out if they are unwell. When they are out, they should follow basic hygiene measures.

- **InterNASC transfer will resume.**

**HealthCERT audits**

HealthCERT routine audits (certification audits, surveillance audits, partial provisional audits and provisional audits) will recommence as per the Designated Auditing Agency handbook.

**Staff mandatory training programme**

Staff mandatory training programmes should resume.

**InterRAI assessment**

All InterRAI assessments need to be completed from 1 July 2020.
Related links