

COVID-19 Information for visiting Aged Residential Care facilities

Information for visiting Aged Residential Care Facilities

14 August 2020

During the different COVID-19 Alert Levels, visits to Aged Residential Care (ARC) Facilities will be restricted. This will be a difficult time for residents and their whānau and friends who are unable to visit as they normally would. It is important that ARC facilities take these extra precautions to ensure people in the facility are safe, particularly those who are more at risk of infection and severe illness.

When will I be able to visit?

Alert Level 4 and 3

During Alert level 4 and 3, whānau and friend visits to ARC facilities will not be possible. Visits will be restricted to essential or emergency services and staff only. Family visits on compassionate grounds will be considered, such as in a palliative situation. This will be determined on a case by case basis, subject to public health advice, provider assessment and COVID-19 risk screening. Visits will be by appointment only.

Provider assessment and COVID-19 risk screening will include checking if you are unwell or have recently been in contact with someone who has been unwell, a sign in/out process and formal visiting hours.

Visitors must follow provider policy and guidance on infection prevention and control when entering and when within the facility. This includes hand hygiene, physical distancing and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) where indicated, according to current advice on use of PPE on the Ministry of Health website (<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-workers-including-personal-protective-equipment/personal-protective-equipment-use-health-care>).

It is important to remain in your 'bubble' and only have contact with people in your household. Leaving your home increases the risk of the spread of COVID-19. Dropping off gifts and food is not considered essential. The provider can cater for all cultural and dietary requirements. If you have any concerns and wish to discuss these needs further, contact the provider directly.

Alert Level 2

During Alert Level 2 more visiting will be allowed, including general family visits and non-essential service visits. However, providers will take precautions and manage visiting in a controlled way to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission to residents and staff.

Measures for managing visits will include:

- Visits may be limited to designated visitors.
- There may be a limit on the number of designated visitors at one time, by appointment and sign in process. Check with the provider directly prior to organising a visit.

- Lengths of visits and visiting areas will be determined at the discretion of the provider. Consideration will include the resident's health, preference and request, and the number of appointments the facility already has.
- Health screening and assessment of visitors will be completed before entering the facility.
- Visitors must follow the Ministry of Health's and the facility's infection prevention and control measures, for example hand hygiene, physical distancing and appropriate use of PPE.

External contractors may be able to recommence visits for services, however these will be managed by the provider who will consider the national Alert Level 2 framework, assess any COVID-19 risks and implement controlled measures to mitigate these risks.

Alert Level 1

During Alert Level 1 visiting ARC facilities will be permitted. Providers may continue to take some extra precautions to reduce the risk to the residents and staff. Contact the provider to discuss further. Note:

- The national Alert Level 1 framework regarding physical distancing must be adhered to.
- Basic hygiene practices remain in place.
- Formal visiting hours may remain in place.

No visitors who are currently probable or confirmed cases of COVID-19, close contacts of COVID-19 cases, or have symptoms of COVID-19, will be granted entry to a facility during any Alert Level.

Can I visit if the ARC facility has confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases?

If a facility has residents or staff who are currently probable or confirmed cases of COVID-19, the facility will operate as under Alert level 4 and 3, and no general family visits will be allowed.

How can I keep in contact if I can't visit?

Contact the provider to discuss other options to maintain contact. This may include:

- support to use social media or online apps to talk face to face
- regular telephone calls
- regular updates with the provider, resident and Enduring Power of Attorney.

I feel worried that I am not able to visit

Not being able to visit can have a significant impact on both whānau and the person in the ARC facility. Feelings of loneliness, anxiety, worry and distress can arise after periods of being apart and not seeing each other. It is important to maintain your own mental health and wellbeing during this time. For helpful information and resources, go to:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources>