



## GUIDANCE

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### COVID-19 - Community Pharmacy Aged Care Services

Update 4 August 2020

#### About this document

The following document provides guidance for those community pharmacies servicing a Residential Aged Care facility (RACF) during the COVID-19 measures and to support a community pharmacy's risk management practices. It is intended as a guide only and should be used in conjunction with the arrangements that the contracted pharmacy and facility have made in relation to supporting and complying with the COVID-19 measures<sup>1</sup> and the official government advice (links at the end of the document).

As the situation and risk for residents and facilities is changing rapidly, please ensure that you are keeping up to date with the current advice in your jurisdiction.

Please also ensure you are familiar with the advice on **Aged Care Services** as provided by the Australian Government Department of Health: <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/providing-aged-care-services-during-covid-19>

For more COVID-19 community pharmacy-specific information and resources, visit the [Guild website](#).

#### COVID-19 measures and scenarios

##### 1. Hygiene practices to minimise the risk of transmission

###### Appropriately sanitise all pharmacy items that are going to and from the RACF

- Implement a daily cleaning protocol for all items that are reused, including containers, baskets and folders. Where possible, use disposable alternatives, including bags and liners.
- For Dose Administration Aids (WebsterCare-type) and containers, including tubs, consider using an alcohol-based solution (such as 70% alcohol with 0.05% Chlorhexidine<sup>2</sup>).
- Schedule 8 medicines – consider avoiding the often used 'double-receiving system which reuses packaging (e.g. zip-lock bags) and replace this system with disposable paper bags.

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<sup>1</sup> It is anticipated that community pharmacies servicing RACFs will be in regular communication (via phone, email and fax) with their contractor facility in order to support and comply with the facility's COVID-19 measures. This document is not intended to override the agreed measures that the RACF.

<sup>2</sup> **Chlorhexidine**, also known as **chlorhexidine** gluconate (CHG), is a disinfectant and antiseptic that is used for skin disinfection before surgery and to sterilize surgical instruments. It may be used both to disinfect the skin of the patient and the hands of the healthcare providers

## Visiting the RACF

- Any staff showing the symptoms of COVID-19 infection should not be attending work and therefore not entering the RACF.
- All people entering aged care facilities are required to be vaccinated against influenza, Providers must sight appropriate evidence of immunisation status from visitors and workers<sup>3</sup>.
- Consider that a facility may already be adapting its established influenza protocols to COVID-19, including lockdown. Make sure you and your staff understand and follow the latest protocols instituted by the facility, which may mean handing items over at the signing in desk, rather than entering the facility, and the recommended or mandatory use of PPE.
- Staff should follow hygiene procedures to minimise the risk of transmission, including the use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after entering the facility, using their own pens rather than sharing, and sanitising those afterwards.
- When transporting Schedule 8 Medicines (controlled substances) consider reviewing your relevant State/Territory guidelines and/or code of practice, for example, SA Government's [Code of Practice](#)<sup>4</sup>, or the Victorian Government's Supplying medicines to residential aged care – Requirements for pharmacists<sup>5</sup>.
- For services that require attendance at the facility, such as meetings and Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) activities, consider undertaking these remotely (via teleconference/videoconference) or suspending them in-line with the pharmacy's and RACFs agreed COVID-19 measures (this may require a review and/or variation to the pharmacy's contract with the RACF).

## 2. Contingency planning for pharmacy operations

Ensure that you have the latest copy of the RACF's COVID-19 contingency plan and that the role of pharmacy is considered and clearly articulated in this plan. Similarly, ensure that you clearly communicate to the facility, and the residents' regular GPs, what measures your pharmacy is taking to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spread, including your business continuity plan. This will help to reassure the facility and its residents that you're taking the necessary steps to help manage this situation in a professional manner.

### Ensuring ongoing supply of medicines and services

To ensure ongoing supply of medicines to the RACF, consider making alternate supply arrangements in case your pharmacy has to close due to COVID-19 exposure. This may include scenarios where the shutdown is short, to enable proper cleaning of the pharmacy, or a longer shut down due to loss of critical staff, such as in sole trading pharmacies. Consider making arrangements with other pharmacy colleagues that may be able to assist with your aged care services.

### IT infrastructure and software

In the event of a pharmacy closure during COVID-19, consider establishing a contingency arrangement with another pharmacy who share the same IT platform whereby medication records and files can be shared, and operations can be re-assigned with minimal disruption. (This may require asking your software provider for a list of pharmacies in your area that use the same software platform).

### Pharmacy workforce contingency

In line with your business continuity plan, ensure that you are monitoring the current situation in your local area and adjust your plan accordingly. Depending on the incidence of infection in the area, consider

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/06/flu-vaccination-requirements-for-aged-care-facilities.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> SA Government - Code of Practice for the Storage and Transport of Drugs of Dependence November 2012.

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/9c2649804ddcb87b901efe6d722e1562/CPSTDD+201909.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-9c2649804ddcb87b901efe6d722e1562-mRdbHWd>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/supplying-medicines-residential-aged-care-requirements-pharmacists>

separating your staff providing aged care services, into teams, if possible. To ensure the continuity of pharmacy activities, if possible, implement arrangements so that members of each shift do not cross each other.

**Contact your local Guild Branch for further assistance.**

## **Quick access to government advice and resources specific to aged care**

For specific guidance and advice refer to your State/Territory Health Department website and to the Commonwealth Department of Health website:

<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.agedcarequality.gov.au/covid-19-coronavirus-information>

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/industry-code-for-visiting-residential-aged-care-homes-during-covid-19> (Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19)

### **NSW**

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus-raf-guidance.aspx>

### **ACT**

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/aged-care-facilities-and-workers>

### **Queensland**

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/aged-care>

### **Victoria**

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

### **Tasmania**

[https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable\\_diseases\\_prevention\\_unit/infectious\\_diseases/coronavirus](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable_diseases_prevention_unit/infectious_diseases/coronavirus)

### **South Australia**

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+topics+a+-+z/covid+2019/covid-19+response/aged+care+facility+visitation+in+south+australia+-+covid-19>

### **Western Australia**

[https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A\\_E/Coronavirus](https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus)

### **Northern Territory**

<https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/community-advice/elderly-and-aged-care/residential-aged-care>