



# FAQS

## FLU VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR AGED CARE FACILITIES

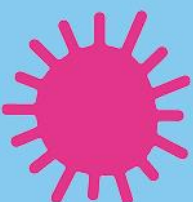
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Each state and territory has directions about entering residential aged care facilities. The directions give effect to the recommendations of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, endorsed by the National Cabinet.

Residential aged care providers and visitors to aged care facilities must remain up-to-date with their state or territory directions. You can find this information on your state or territory website. Contact your relevant state or territory government for advice on how this applies to you.

The directions are available on the following websites:

- [New South Wales](#)
- [Victoria](#)
- [Queensland](#)
- [South Australia](#)
- [Western Australia](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
- [Australian Capital Territory](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)



## Flu vaccinations

The annual influenza (flu) vaccine for 2020 is now available. It is most important this year with the COVID-19 global pandemic. Cases of the flu can increase the burden on the health system.

While the flu vaccine cannot protect against COVID-19, you can become ill with the flu and COVID-19 together. This may cause severe outcomes, including hospitalisation.

### Will all visitors need to be vaccinated?

Yes. Entry to residential aged care facilities is restricted to people who have had a current flu vaccination. This applies to:

- staff
- visitors
- health practitioners
- volunteers, and
- other people entering the facility (e.g. cleaners, tradesman, gardeners and maintenance staff).

### What happens if staff are not able to be vaccinated?

Some states and territories have exemptions to the entry restrictions. For example, if a person has a medical recommendation against having the flu vaccine. Individuals should refer to their state or territory exemptions as there are differences between jurisdictions.

The only absolute contraindications to flu vaccines are:

- anaphylaxis after a previous flu vaccine
- anaphylaxis after any part of a flu vaccine

People with egg allergy, including a history of anaphylaxis, can be safely vaccinated with flu vaccines.

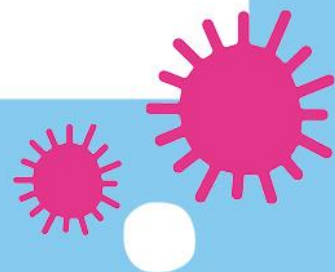
The flu vaccination is not recommended if you:

- have a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome, and
- the first episode occurred within 6 weeks of receiving a flu vaccine.

If a person is receiving cancer immuno-oncology therapies (checkpoint inhibitors) they need to consult their treating doctor first.

Where there are vaccine supply restrictions, exemptions may apply to:

- emergency service workers
- end of life support visitors, and
- residential aged care workers



## Do residential aged care providers need to provide free flu vaccinations to staff and volunteers?

Yes. All Australian Government subsidised residential aged care providers must offer staff and volunteers free access to annual flu vaccinations. This is at the provider's cost.

## What should residential aged care workers do if they experience symptoms after getting the flu vaccine?

Some people who receive the flu vaccine will experience fever and lethargy as a side effect. However, this is unusual in adults. If caused by the vaccine, it is usually mild and short-lived. Fever and lethargy are also common symptoms of COVID-19 and could be an early indication of infection.

Aged care workers with cold and flu-like symptoms must **not** work while unwell. Health and aged care workers who are unwell with any of the following symptoms must quarantine and get tested for COVID-19:

- respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, sore throat)
- a fever or a history of fever (e.g. night sweats, chills)
- other symptoms such as loss of taste and loss of smell

Stay home until you receive your test results. Notify your employer that you are unwell and are in quarantine.

If your result is negative, remain at home until you are well enough to return to work. Keep your employer updated on your health status.

If you return a positive test result for COVID-19, follow the advice of your doctor. You must isolate in either your home or in a hospital until you are advised you can return to work.

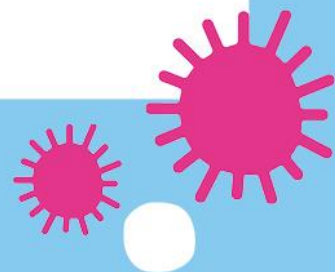
## What are aged care providers' obligations regarding entry into residential aged care facilities?

Under state and territory directions, aged care providers must ensure prohibited people do not enter or remain in the aged care facility.

## Will aged care providers ask a visitor or worker to prove they are vaccinated?

Yes. Aged care providers must sight **appropriate evidence of immunisation status** from visitors and workers. Appropriate evidence may be:

- a statement or record from a health practitioner
- an immunisation history statement available from Medicare online
- the Express Plus Medicare mobile app



Aged care providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure visitors who do not meet the requirements do not enter the facility.

Aged care providers may ask to see evidence from a worker, or rely on the employer's assurance. For example, employers may include:

- a State Government body that employs emergency services workers (such as ambulance drivers or paramedics); or
- an employment agency for temporary agency staff

## How is compliance assessed?

State and territory law enforcement agencies will enforce these directions. Persons who fail to comply with any of the directions may face penalties. These include fines for individuals and for bodies corporate.

## Will residents still have the right to refuse vaccination?

Yes, residents have the right to refuse vaccinations. The flu vaccination requirements do not apply to residents of an aged care facility.

## Who can administer a flu vaccination?

Flu vaccinations are given by a doctor, nurse or Aboriginal health professional.

In some situations, flu vaccinations are also given by authorised pharmacists. All health professionals are required to practise in accordance with state/territory legislation and relevant policy.

## Who should aged care providers, visitors and workers contact if they have concerns or questions?

Aged care providers and individuals should contact their local state or territory government for more information.

