



COVIDSafe festive season in residential aged care facilities

19 December 2020

2020 has been a challenging year for those who live and work in residential aged care facilities and their loved ones.

Now that the festive season is upon us, it is time to acknowledge and celebrate our achievements together. That includes supporting facilities to celebrate and reconnect in a safe way.

The pandemic is not over, and we need to ensure festivities happen in a way that will protect our aged care residents – and staff and volunteers – from future outbreaks of coronavirus (COVID-19) in aged care settings.

Victoria moved to [COVIDSafe Summer](#) restrictions on Sunday 6 December 2020. These restrictions, including those for visiting residential aged [care facilities](#), are expected to be in place for summer. The restrictions will be reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect current public health advice.

COVIDSafe Summer restrictions provide Victorians with the confidence to move around in the community while protecting everything Victorians have worked so hard to achieve.

This fact sheet is to assist residential aged care providers with planning and hosting events and activities over the festive holiday season. It covers the current restrictions and provides tips so everyone can enjoy celebrations whilst remainingsafe.*



Enjoying festive activities

There are no longer restrictions on the purpose, number or duration of visits to residential aged care facilities.

Based on expert public health advice, the COVIDSafe Summer restrictions allow for activities to be undertaken in a safe way.

Tips

Here are some of the activities you can hold:

- Morning/afternoon teas
- Performances and entertainment e.g. musicians, playing carols
- Religious services
- Luncheons
- Christmas parties
- Hanukkah celebrations
- Visits from Santa Claus and gift giving
- Christmas bus tours.



Having safe events in your facility

Entering the facility

Any visitor, volunteer, performer or contractor visiting a residential aged care facility, including outside grounds, will be checked for coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and must declare in writing before entering a facility that they:

- are free of coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- have not been in contact with someone confirmed to have coronavirus (COVID-19)
- have not been directed to isolate or quarantine.

Declarations can be managed by the facility via a form or an app, [such as the free Victorian QR Code service available online](#). A parent or guardian can make a declaration for their child.

Anyone entering a facility must maintain physical distancing, hand hygiene and wear a face mask.

*This fact sheet has been prepared on the basis that Victoria will continue to experience no further outbreaks in residential aged care facilities and low levels of community transmission. If circumstances change, new Public Health Directions or restrictions may be imposed.

Setting up your space

Tips

Where physical distancing is not possible, facilities can:

- use outdoor spaces such as gardens, verandas and courtyards
- reduce the number of visitors invited to the event
- set up events in groups to provide adequate physical distancing so that all residents can spend time with their visiting families and friends.

To ensure there is appropriate physical distancing, each space needs to maintain a density limit of one person per two square metres. To calculate this, take the total area of the room and divide by two. For example, a space of 12x10m=120m² could fit a total of 60 people (120÷2=60).

Family groups can meet where the facility has the space to accommodate such groups in line with its COVIDsafe plan. This includes regular cleaning, seating arrangements and separate groupings, hand sanitiser stations and scheduling of groups.

All visitors over 12 years of age must wear a face mask unless they have a lawful exemption.

For an event only for residents, where there are no external attendees, physical distancing is not required.



Performances and services

Festive season events may include performances or religious services. Facilities are to ensure any performers, musicians or those conducting events are physically distanced from each other and the audience.

All facilities need to consider the following:

- performers and those conducting events or services should be made aware of entry requirements (e.g. influenza vaccination is recommended) well in advance
- allow enough time to ensure all entry processes (screening check, signing in, making a declaration) can be completed
- events that include singing should be organised so there is adequate spacing between visiting household groups and good ventilation this applies to both indoor and outdoor settings.

- performances, events and services should be arranged so that people are not encouraged to gather at a single point
- performers and those conducting events or services should always maintain physical distancing from residents, visitors and staff, whilst performing
 - It is recommended that performers keep two metres distance from each other.
 - The stage and performers should not be positioned directly above the audience and performers be at least five metres from the audience where practical.

Festive dining

- It is important that special festive season meals are served in a COVIDSafe way. A number of steps can be taken to reduce transmission risks during meal service. These are outlined in the Tips box below.

Tips

- Use plated or boxed meals rather than shared platters. Do not provide any self-serve buffets, grazing/share plates or self-serve drinks stations.
- Ensure communal dining areas don't exceed a density limit of one person per 2 square metres.
- Physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres between family groups.
- Visitors should remove masks only once at their table and only for the time it takes to eat.
- Consider use of outdoor dining areas, where available.
- Consider scheduling functions for different groups on different days/times.

After the event

Cleaning up

Facilities must keep spaces as clean and safe as possible, including:

- providing regular reminders for staff, volunteers, performers, residents and family to follow hand hygiene practices throughout the event
- providing hand sanitiser at appropriate locations such as entry and exit points and common areas
- ensuring high touch surfaces are wiped down throughout the event

- planning for enhanced cleaning after the event.

Health monitoring

Everyone wants to get back to normal, but we also need to stay safe over the holiday and summer period. You can help by getting tested if you, your team or residents feel unwell, and following COVIDSafe practices. You will need to self-isolate while awaiting test results.

Retain records of all visitors

All Victorian residential aged care facilities must keep a record of people who work at or visit the facility and the date and time of that visit. Visitor records need to be kept for 28 days from the day of entry. The following details need to be recorded:

- the contact details of the person
- the date and time each person entered and left the care facility - [the free Victorian QR Code service is available online to help keep records..](#)
- the person's answers to the declaration questions (see *Entering the facility* above)
- temperature screening outcome (if temperature check conducted).

Visits or excursions

Under [COVIDSafe Summer](#) restrictions, residents can leave their care facility for any reason, provided they comply with the current restrictions applicable to all Victorians.

Tips

Finding an interesting activity that is suitable for an older person takes some creativity and planning, but it is well worth switching up the routine and celebrating.

- Picnics are a flexible activity that you can plan at a park, in your own backyard, or on the surrounding grounds of a long-term care facility
- Visit an art gallery
- Carol singers in community halls
- Regional festive lights celebrations

When residents leave their care facility, it is important to remind them that they must comply with the general [COVIDSafe Summer](#) restrictions. These include:

- physical distancing (maintaining 1.5m distance from others)
- carrying a fitted face mask at all times, and wearing the mask on public transport, in taxis or ride share vehicles, or when going to shopping centres, indoor

markets and large retail stores (2000 square metres or more), such as supermarkets and department stores

- wearing a fitted face mask in all other situations when you cannot maintain a distance of 1.5 metres from others, including outdoors
- observing limits on private and public gatherings
- not seeing or visiting people who are unwell
- not visiting people who are in quarantine or isolation.



Transportation

Travelling in vehicles, such as minibuses, for group outings is permitted. Face masks should be worn while in the vehicle and physical distancing should occur where people are reasonably capable of doing so.

Where the vehicle transport is operated by the care facility (or a similar organisation), the transport can only occur in accordance with a COVIDSafe Plan, which outlines how the activity can be managed in a COVIDSafe way. This would include measures such as recording who used the vehicle, regular cleaning of the vehicle and encouraging driving with windows down to encourage ventilation.

Travel on public transport is allowed however a face mask is mandatory in this setting, unless a person has a lawful reason not to wear a mask. More information for safe travel on public transport can be found on the [Public Transport Victoria](#) website <<https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/more/coronavirus-covid-19/>>.

The destination for any excursion must also be permitted by the public health directions.

For more information about permitted activities see: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/how-we-live>

Returning from an outing

When a resident returns from an outing, they will be [screened](#) like any other person entering the facility, for example, having their temperature checked.

When residents return it is important that:

- they wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser before they enter the facility
- staff wipe down walkers and wheelchairs with two in one detergent and disinfectant wipes
- the usual screening of the person escorting the resident back to the facility occurs.

Statutory Obligations

Note: The obligations owed by aged care providers contained in the Aged Care Act 1997 (Cth), the Aged Care Quality Standards and the Charter of Aged Care Rights, include the requirement to:

- treat residents with dignity and respect, support residents to exercise choice and independence and take risks (Standard 1);
- provide services and supports for daily living, including assisting residents to participate in their community both within and outside the service environment (Standard 4).

COVIDSafe Summer

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To find out more information about coronavirus and how to stay safe visit DHHS.vic – coronavirus (COVID-19)

<<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>>

If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450

For information in other languages, scan the QR code or visit

DHHS.vic – Translated resources - coronavirus (COVID-19)

<<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/translated-resources-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>>



For any questions

Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 (24 hours)

Please keep Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only

To receive this document in another format phone 1300 651 160 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email [Emergency Management Communications <COVID-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au>](mailto:Emergency.Management.Communications.COVID-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

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Available at: [DHHS.vic – coronavirus \(COVID-19\) https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus)

For a summary of the current restrictions across the State, please go to:

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covidsafe-summer>

Relevant directions

[**Care Facilities Directions \(No.18\)**](#)

[**Stay Safe Directions \(Victoria\) \(No.4\)**](#)

[**Worker
\(Additional
Industry
Obligations\)
Directions
\(No.14\)**](#)



Other resources

[**Visiting aged care facilities**](#)