

# Requirements for bringing loved ones home during COVID-19

It's a big decision to move someone from a residential aged care facility to a home setting – now more than ever. There are many things to think about and prepare for. You'll need to work with the residential aged care facility and home care provider to provide the best level of care to keep your loved one safe. This fact sheet provides guidance on your responsibilities and how to get ready.

## First requirement for eligibility: the resident must test negative

Before any home transfer, your loved one (the resident) **must** be tested and return a negative COVID-19 test result. We highly recommend that all household members are also tested and cleared of COVID-19.

## If facility has a COVID-19 outbreak: mandatory 14-day quarantine

If any member of residential aged care facility staff or another resident has tested positive, your loved one and the entire household must quarantine for 14 days to reduce the risk of community transmission. Quarantine applies even if you all returned negative COVID-19 results.

During quarantine, everyone in your household must use personal protective equipment (PPE), including gowns, face masks, eye protection and gloves.

Before quarantine arrangements can be lifted, every member of the household will be required to test negative.

## The first question to consider

The first, most important, question is to ask your loved one what they want to happen. You may be surprised by their answer. Then it's about how you plan to care for them.

## Other important questions

### Your home's suitability

Will the resident have their own bedroom, ideally with their own bathroom or ensuite?

Is the physical environment safe?

Does the home have stairs? Are there railings in the shower and toilet? Is the bed suitable? Is there a step in the shower or other amenities?

### Level of care

Have you reviewed the care plan provided by the facility to make sure you're able to provide the level of care and treatment required?

Can you provide care 24 hours a day? Ideally, one or two household members should be designated caregivers.

Is your loved one mobile? Will they need mobility aids? Ask the facility for loan equipment. If it is not available, you may need to hire equipment at your own cost.

Are you able to provide PPE for times when the home care providers are not providing services?

Will home meals meet the dietary needs specified in the care plan? For example, you may need to provide pureed or mashed food.

Have you made arrangements with the pharmacy and aged care facility to access your loved one's medications?

### Household members and carers

Are all household members prepared to quarantine for 14 days if your loved one has come from a COVID-19 positive facility?

Is anyone in the household ill?



## What must be in place ahead of time

You need to prepare so that you and your family know what to do before and after the resident comes home.

Make sure you have:

- ▶ discussed care requirements with the aged care facility and received the care plan from the aged care facility
- ▶ spoken to the home care provider and are aware of the services you're entitled to
- ▶ spoken to the pharmacy and can access medication and appropriately administer it – ask for Webster-paks® or equivalent
- ▶ considered how you will provide intimate care, including changing and disposing of incontinence pads, showering and toileting
- ▶ discussed payment options with the residential aged care facility

Under the emergency leave arrangements in the Aged Care Act, residents can return home temporarily without losing their place in the aged care home or being financially penalised. However, residential aged care clients are still expected to pay their regular fees while on leave.

## How your aged care provider can help

All aged care facilities have a responsibility to make the transfer as smooth as possible and provide support to family and carers if they can.

- ▶ They should prepare a written care plan for you, and discuss a care start and end date with the home care provider.
- ▶ They are encouraged to support you with access to PPE.
- ▶ They may lend you goods, equipment and assistive technology (including mobility aids and toileting aids). However, this is not mandatory.
- ▶ They will regularly engage with home care providers while the resident is in home care, including providing regular updates on how the facility is going.
- ▶ They will work with the home care provider to ensure a smooth transition back to the aged care facility.

Remember, if your loved one's care needs are high and complex, they may have to remain in the residential aged care facility or be transferred to another suitable facility or hospital. The residential aged care provider will arrange this.

## Talk to an aged care advocate if you need support through this process

Aged care advocates walk alongside older people and their families. They provide older people with a voice and work at their direction.

Most importantly, they are independent of aged care providers and the government, and the support they offer is free.

For support, information or advocacy services, Freecall the Advocacy Line on **1800 700 600** to be connected to ERA. We're available 6am–10pm AEST 7 days.



If you need an interpreter, call **131 450**.



For the National Relay Service (NRS), call **133 677**.

If you prefer, email [covid@opan.com.au](mailto:covid@opan.com.au)  
Please put ERA in the subject line and include your contact number in the text.



In Victoria, your advocacy provider is Elder Rights Advocacy (ERA).

ERA is a member of OPAN, the Older Persons Advocacy Network, which is a national aged care advocacy organisation. ERA provides free, confidential, independent aged care advocacy and information to older people, their families and representatives.