



## Coronavirus: Q&A for family of residents and customers

We understand that families of those in our homes are concerned about the spread of coronavirus. We have been working closely with the three Local Health Districts that cover our nine residential care homes, and have put measures in place early to keep your loved ones safe. This is our priority.

### **WE HAVE PLANS TO MANAGE AN OUTBREAK**

We have a COVID-19 action plan in place for managing a COVID-19 outbreak if it were to occur in any of our homes, and we want to make sure you are also prepared if this terrible situation does eventuate.

Knowing what we all need to do, we can work together to get through this and – most importantly – are able to care for your loved one.

### ***What we need you to know***

If we have an outbreak of COVID-19 in our home and there is a positive resident/customer or staff member, **we will need your support and understanding.**

**Your loved one may need to be moved** to prevent infection, if they are COVID-19 positive or are near someone who is. You will be notified and we will take every step to ensure they get the care they need, and will work with you to make that decision based on their condition.

**If we do need to move someone we will do this in a way that is sensitive to their needs**, and take care of their belongings and we will move them back to their room as soon as we are able.

We understand that this is a time of heightened anxiety and you may want contact or questions answered quickly about what is happening regarding what is happening at the home.

While caring for your loved ones is our number one priority, you are important members of our community too and we understand that you need to be kept informed.

The details for you to contact with any COVID-19 related questions are:

- Customer Relations Information Line on 1800 927 744, operating seven days a week between 9am to 9pm
- Email [warrigal@warrigal.com.au](mailto:warrigal@warrigal.com.au)
- [warrigal.com.au](http://warrigal.com.au) – For up-to-date information on COVID-19 news

While we understand that you may want to contact the home directly, the staff at the home will be very busy managing the outbreak, and our outbreak management plan involves contacting families where there is a COVID-19 positive result directly and then the Rapid Response Team will coordinate communication with all families. We will also be in touch via Zoom, so please to ensure we can communicate promptly with you, please make sure we have your current email address and/or phone number.

While these containment plans are vital to have in place, we want you to know that our focus is on prevention of a COVID-19 outbreak along with the health and well-being of our community of residents/customers, staff and contractors.

***Please see below for our responses to questions you may have for the latest information.***

**What is the definition of a COVID-19 outbreak?**

A single confirmed case of COVID-19 in a resident, staff member or frequent attendee of a residential aged care facility.

**How will Warrigal identify if there is a COVID-19 outbreak?**

Warrigal continually monitors residents and customers for any symptoms that could be related to COVID-19. These symptoms include:

- fever
- respiratory symptoms
- coughing
- sore/scratchy throat
- shortness of breath

Other symptoms can include night sweats or chills, runny nose, headache, muscle or joint pains, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, loss of sense of smell, altered sense of taste, loss of appetite, fatigue and conjunctivitis.

At the moment, Warrigal is reporting every case where the above symptoms are displayed to the Public Health Unit. The outbreak is confirmed by testing but we will immediately implement infection control measures even before test results are available.

**PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS**

**What steps are being taken by Warrigal to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the homes?**

Our specific safety COVID-19 safety measures include:

**Flu shots:** We provided free flu vaccinations for all staff and volunteers, and it is a requirement that any contractor or visitor coming into the home provides proof of their vaccination.

**Mandatory training:** We provide ongoing mandatory training in infection control, hand hygiene and donning and doffing PPE.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** To limit the risk of infection, all employees and contractors are required to wear a mask which we provide, when entering any of our homes. For staff and resident/customer safety, staff will also be using personal protective equipment such as gloves and gowns.

**Symptom Monitoring & Testing:** We carefully monitor staff and residents/customers for any symptoms through a rigid screening process that includes getting temperature checked and getting tested where appropriate.

**Enhanced cleaning:** We have increased cleaning frequency to high touch areas such as the handrails, light switches, door handles, etc. We have also increased the amount of hand sanitisers available in all our homes.

**Limiting to work at one location:** Staff are working at only one location. They are not moving between our homes.

**Revised Visitor Policy:** We restricted visitor access except in palliative care cases, and built Safe Visiting Areas in our homes so families can safely visit their loved ones.

**If a staff member tests positive to COVID-19, how will my loved one's care be affected? Will their care be compromised now that the staff member is not there?**

We have been working hard to source out extra staff to make up for any gaps that could result to a situation like this. We are deeply grateful for the patience, kindness and understanding of our residents and families as we work hard to manage this new challenge.

We have provided additional training to the staff that volunteered to work in the Special Care Unit that was trialled, and these staff would be available to support any home that has an outbreak.

Contact has been made with a number of agencies to confirm that they would be able to supply staff at short notice.

**If my loved one was exposed to the infected person (staff, or another resident/customer) will they get tested?**

All our residents and staff are being closely monitored and will be tested if they show any symptoms compatible with COVID-19.

The Public Health Unit would arrange for all staff and residents that are in a home where there is a positive case to be tested.

We would like to remind families that we are asking anyone with symptoms to self-isolate for 14 days and use HealthDirect's COVID-19 symptom checker to

determine if you need further testing for COVID-19.

(<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/healthdirect-coronavirus-covid-19-symptom-checker>)

### **If we have concerns or the outbreak gets bigger, can I temporarily move my family member out of the care home and into my home?**

Yes. In response to COVID-19, the Ministry of Health has created flexibility in the policy on Temporary Absences from Long Term Care (LTC). This change allows residents to leave their LTC home for a maximum of 90 days in a calendar year. Residents/Customers removed from the home will not be able to re-enter until we and the health authorities are absolutely positive there is no risk in doing so, which could be an extended period.

### **How will Warrigal be looking after my loved one's emotional health in an outbreak?**

We understand isolation is a significant issue among older people and particularly during this pandemic period when many new policies are in place for everyone's protection. We are continually working on creative ways to keep you in touch with your loved one that will not compromise their safety, or the safety of other residents/customers or staff. We understand the measures can be distressing, and will do our best to minimise the impact on residents/customers.

Please contact your local home for more details on what you can do to reach your loved one.

### **When is an outbreak declared over?**

Repeat testing allows for close observation of the outbreak and clarity regarding when it can be declared over. In most circumstances, an outbreak can be declared as over 14 days post isolation of the last case.

We will continue to watch carefully until the risk of COVID-19 subsides in the community.

### **WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?**

Call our Customer Relations Information Line - 1800 927 744 (7 days/week 9am-9pm) or email [warrigal@warrigal.com.au](mailto:warrigal@warrigal.com.au)

For more general advice, you can contact the Older Persons Advocacy Network – 1800 700 600