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| GPs supporting residential care facilities during respiratory virus season |
| Influenza, COVID-19, RSV and other respiratory viruses |
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# Why this matters

GPs play a critical role in protecting residents in care facilities and managing illness, especially during respiratory outbreaks. A recommendation from a trusted health professional remains one of the strongest factors influencing vaccination uptake. The following outlines how you can help keep older people in residential care facilities safe this winter.

## Key messages

* **Promote and administer vaccination** for influenza, COVID-19 and RSV
* **Provide care and antiviral medication** for treatment and prevention
* **Support outbreak response** with timely clinical decision-making

## Vaccination

### Influenza

Funded under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for specific cohorts, including:

* People aged 65 years and over
* People with certain medical conditions that increase the risk of severe flu.

Ensure all eligible residents receive an annual vaccine and offer vaccination to unvaccinated residents and staff during an outbreak.

### COVID-19

Ensure all eligible residents receive regular [COVID-19 booster](https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination) doses in line with current national guidelines.

### RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)

RSV vaccination is recommended for:

* All people aged 75 years and over
* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 60 years and over
* People with medical risk factors for severe RSV disease aged 60 years and over.

GPs should discuss RSV vaccination with eligible residents and their families.

Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/contents/vaccine-preventable-diseases/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv) for RSV vaccines brands and recommendations.

## Antiviral Medication

### Proactive planning

* Ensure Goals of Care and Advanced Care Plans are up to date and documented in the residents’ medical record.
* Ensure relevant clinical assessments (e.g. renal function) have been completed and documented, in case antiviral medications for COVID-19 or influenza are required.

### During an influenza outbreak

* Offer antiviral prophylaxis to asymptomatic residents.
* If residents develop symptoms while on prophylaxis, switch to a treatment dose while awaiting test results.
* Unvaccinated, asymptomatic staff should also receive antiviral prophylaxis. This can be arranged by their treating GP.

## Clinical guidelines and resources

* [Acute respiratory infection management in residential care facilities | health.vic.gov.au](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/acute-respiratory-infection-management-residential-care-facilities) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infections-diseases/acute-respiratory-infection-management-residential-care-facilities>
* [National Guideline for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of Outbreaks of Acute Respiratory Infection in Residential Aged Care Homes | Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-guidelines-for-the-prevention-control-and-public-health-management-of-outbreaks-of-acute-respiratory-infection-in-residential-care-facilities) <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-guidelines-for-the-prevention-control-and-public-health-management-of-outbreaks-of-acute-respiratory-infection-in-residential-care-facilities>
* [Don’t risk the flu and RSV vaccine stakeholder toolkits](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/our-campaigns/dont-risk-the-flu-get-vaccinated) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/our-campaigns/dont-risk-the-flu-get-vaccinated>
* [COVID-19 vaccine advice and recommendations](https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination) <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination>
* [ATAGI guidance on administration of seasonal influenza vaccines in 2025](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/atagi-statement-on-the-administration-of-seasonal-influenza-vaccines-in-2025-0?language=en)

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/atagi-statement-on-the-administration-of-seasonal-influenza-vaccines-in-2025-0?language=en>

* [The Australian Immunisation Handbook](https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/)   
  <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au>
* [Home | Therapeutic Guidelines – Antivirals](https://tgldcdp.tg.org.au) <https://tgldcdp.tg.org.au>

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