



## **Vacenti Update on Coronavirus - COVID-19 - Update no 5** **Information Known as of 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020**

Firstly, please pass this along to any family and friends and assume they have not received their own copy. We have quite a number of families and friends in our Resident database without email addresses. Many thanks to those who sent me details. If you wish to be added, then please email the undersigned with the Facility Name, Residents Name, your name, relationship, email address and mobile no (optional).

Again, it is important you read this to the end.

There have been a number of government announcements since Update No 4 (18<sup>th</sup> March) but not a lot of clarification. The purpose of this advice is to update you on the actions Vacenti is taking and decisions made.

### **Visiting Restrictions**

There has been varying levels of interpretation between aged care providers as to their policy on visitors. We are very aware that a number of providers have gone into full lockdown and not allowing visitors on site, while other providers are enforcing very limited visits per day, or enforcing very short time limits on each visit, etc. We have received a number of phone calls and emails asking why Vacenti is not doing the same. Preventing the virus from entering our homes is our goal and we know it is your goal as well.

Today, our view is that every person residing in our homes, every family member, visitor and staff member are acutely aware of the COVID-19 situation and the very real risks to the elderly, to our residents, to your family.

Today, our view is that every person residing in our homes, every family member, visitor and staff member are acutely aware of what they must do to prevent COVID-19 from entering our homes.

Our current position stems from Department of Health Guidelines which says *“Each resident may have no more than two visitors, including doctors, at a time, and visits by children 16 years and under are not permitted except in special circumstances”*. Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) guidelines dated yesterday, 24<sup>th</sup> March confirmed residents can have more than one visit per day, but with a maximum of 2 people at a time. Visitors are to be immediate social supports (family members, close friends) or professional service or advocacy. We know the Government is trying to restrict the number of people a resident sees and the number of people in total walking through our home. We are not limiting visits to 15 minutes but ask they be as short as possible. Our decisions are a balance between, and consideration of:

- The growth of COVID-19 in the Brisbane community which is being watched closely;
- The number of cases of COVID-19 within aged care, which is extremely low;
- The potential impact of the wellbeing of residents if we were to go into full shutdown;
- The level of compliance of families and visitors to our requirements to handwash, sign in, limit visit time and visit numbers and actively practice social distancing.

We know the number of cases in Brisbane is growing and hence the risks continue to rise. Based on this Vacenti has decided to commence more stringent visiting restrictions no later than Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April, and perhaps earlier. Further details on this will be in the next update. It is also entirely possible that the Commonwealth Government will tighten visiting measures before that as well.

Since our announcement on the 18<sup>th</sup> March, compliance to our requirements has been very good. However, we are aware of the odd few who won't sign in, have to be reminded to sanitise their hands, wander or sit in communal areas, and/or won't respond to staff requests to do the same. These individuals have been spoken to and advised of the ramification if they continue not to follow our requirements. Some of our sites have since taken steps to limit access to the facility outside of the main reception entrance.

**Vacenti is trying hard to prevent social isolation of our residents as long as possible and we depend on everyone to play their part rigorously.**

Our decision will be simple if we don't achieve this every day, all day and will bring forward our visiting restrictions. So please follow the rules, sign in and out at reception, wash your hands, keep your visits short and isolate as much as possible and we might be able to keep our homes open for visits to residents for a little longer. Shutdown is a likely scenario very soon, but not today.

### **Social Distancing**

Our dining rooms have been configured to allow for the recommended social distancing between residents. We require family and visitors not to dine with residents in the dining rooms. Meals can be taken with residents in open areas or in the resident's room.

Our coffee shops/cafes are still open to residents so they may socialise. Our coffee shops/cafes are closed to families and visitors in internal areas. Families and visitors are welcome to share a coffee with a resident in external areas or in the resident's rooms. Indoor café areas have been closed to all contractors. Take away cups are being used. Café staff will be vigilant about social distancing, please follow their directions.

### **Communal Areas**

Internal communal areas i.e. lounges, dining rooms and TV areas are closed to all families and visitors. We welcome your visits to our outside areas or resident's rooms.

### **Wearing Masks and other PPE into our homes**

Entering our homes wearing masks or other PPE is not at all helpful to alleviate the level of concern amongst our resident population. If you are wearing a mask / PPE because you are concerned you have COVID-19 and may spread it to others, then do not visit. If you are wearing a mask / PPE because you are concerned you may be infected by COVID-19 on our sites then I can assure you, we do not have any cases of COVID-19 at this point.

### **Taking residents off site**

You are welcome to take your loved one for a drive or somewhere off site. Again, we strongly suggest you consider the risks of where you go and comply with social distancing guidelines. Open areas are ok, but avoid shopping centres or anywhere where you cannot control or minimise the risk of infection.

### **Telehealth Stations**

We have received the relevant equipment and are currently setting up our Telehealth Stations. You will be able to communicate with your loved one through Skype once these stations are setup and running. The Skype IDs are "Portofino Telehealth", "Lorocco Telehealth", "Marebello Telehealth", "Casa Damore Telehealth" and "Esida Telehealth". The stations will be up and running by Friday. We will provide further details to you on how to use this service, who to contact and make an appointment, etc.

### **Vacenti Website**

Our [Vacenti Website](#) now has a "Latest News" tab which is specifically about COVID-19 and what we are doing, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), etc.

### **Vaccinations**

The Prime Minister announced on the 18<sup>th</sup> March that from 1 May, you must have your influenza vaccination in order to visit an aged care facility. We know there have been many questions about the mandatory requirement for influenza vaccinations including anaphylaxis issues and conscientious objectors. We have not received any further information but will keep you informed as information comes available and well before the 1<sup>st</sup> May.

### **Voting May 28<sup>th</sup> – Council Elections**

As you are aware Council elections are being held Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March. We have been advised by the Queensland Electoral Commission that they will not visit aged care homes as per past practice. Residents who wish to vote have to go to a polling booth (which we do not recommend) or can register for telephone voting. This option closes at 12pm on Saturday, 28 March. Registrations can be made by calling 1300 912 782 and choosing option 1. Voting is on the same number and choosing option 2. Voting closes at 6pm on Saturday, 28 March.

Alternatively, residents who wish to be excused from voting can give their names to our Administration staff and we will provide a list to the Electoral Commission to complete their records for absentees.

## Thank you

Vacenti would like to sincerely thank all residents, families and friends for your cooperation and understanding at this unprecedented time. We know there is a lot of concern in the community and the rate of change in both the situation, and information provided by a multitude of sources is staggering. However, we can assure that all of our staff are working very hard, every day, to keep you and your loved ones as safe as possible.



Australian Government  
Department of Health

## Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

### Information for residents of residential aged care services, their family members and visitors

Older people are more at risk of both contracting COVID-19, and having a serious illness as a result. Managers, staff, family, friends and residents need to work together to protect our most vulnerable community members.

In order to protect older people, new restrictions on visits to aged care facilities apply. It is important staff, visitors and visiting workers take care to ensure they stay away from residential aged care services if they may have COVID-19. They should closely monitor their own health, and will be asked to provide details on their health status before entering a facility.

#### Residents

Like all members of the community, people who live in residential aged care services have an important role to play in protecting their own health. In addition to practising good hygiene and social distancing, there will be restrictions on visits to residential aged care facilities. Large group visits, gatherings, and external excursions will be postponed. Residents will be supported to stay connected with family and friends by phone and video calls.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, you will be kept separate from other residents and will not be able to see visitors. Health care and residential care workers will continue to provide support and care while you are isolated. If you need to leave your room, such as for medical care, you will be required to wear a surgical mask, which will be provided by health care workers. There is no need for any healthy resident to wear a mask.

#### Visitors

Visitors who have returned from overseas or been in contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 in the last 14 days will not be able to visit a residential aged care facility. Nor will anyone with a fever, symptoms of a respiratory illness, or who has not been vaccinated against influenza, be able to visit.

From 1 May, you must have your influenza vaccination in order to visit an aged care facility.

Visits should be short, and conducted in the resident's room, outside, or in a specific designated area (not a communal space).

Each resident may have no more than two visitors, including doctors, at a time, and visits by children 16 years and under are not permitted except in special circumstances.

All visitors will need to wash their hands before entering and leaving a resident's room and will be encouraged to practise social distancing where possible, including to stay away when unwell.

#### Managers and staff

The Government has announced that residential aged care facilities should take extra precautions to keep residents safe from COVID-19. The health of staff will be closely monitored, new and returning residents will be screened before entry, and signage and other forms of communication will be used to explain the steps being taken to protect the health of residents.

To make more workers available to aged care providers, the Government is relaxing international student visa work conditions for aged care facilities and home care providers. This will allow international student nurses and other aged care workers to work more than the 40 hours a fortnight. There are currently around 20,000 international student nurses studying in Australia.

## How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, including before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and wash your hands, and
- avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people whenever possible).

## More information

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness – not COVID-19.

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

Call the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available at [www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts](http://www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts)

If you have concerns about your health, speak to a doctor.

Yours sincerely

**Brian Sharp**

**Manager – Information & Compliance**

**Vacenti** 

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