

# INDEPENDENT LIVING RESIDENTS

## COVID-19 UPDATE: APRIL 2020

**The presence of COVID-19 in Australia and internationally is affecting the way we live, think and feel. Everyone across our community is being impacted in some way.**

At UnitingSA, we are changing the way we work to ensure the health and wellbeing of the people we support, including our Independent Living residents, is protected during this challenging time.

This fact sheet provides answers to some of the commonly asked questions among residents within our Independent Living communities.

### What precautions is UnitingSA taking for its Independent Living communities?

We have undertaken a raft of precautionary measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure within our Independent Living communities. Until further notice, we have:

- Cancelled all face-to-face group meetings
- Put a freeze on any group or community gatherings within communal spaces, including barbecue areas
- Introduced strict COVID-19 screening measures for staff and any essential visitors or contractors at sites
- Postponed all maintenance works, except those deemed 'essential'.

We will continue to assess State and Federal Government guidelines and adjust our site practices accordingly to ensure the ongoing protection of residents across our communities.

### What steps should residents take to reduce the risk of COVID-19?

The Federal Government has advised all Australians to stay at home unless they are shopping for food, attending medical appointments or exercising.

In addition, people aged 70 years or older and those aged 65 with existing health conditions are strongly encouraged to self-isolate at home wherever possible. To support residents to remain at home, the following should be considered:

- Ordering groceries online instead of visiting shops
- Arranging meal delivery either through a dedicated service or local restaurant/takeaway outlet
- Accessing the bulk-billed telehealth service to receive medical appointments over the phone or via video conferencing, rather than scheduling face-to-face visits with a GP.

### What is the latest social distancing and hygiene advice?

All Australians are being asked to practise 'social distancing', including staying 1.5 metres away from other people and restricting 'non-essential' gatherings to two people. This also applies within residents' homes.

Good hygiene practices are also crucial to protect against the spread of COVID-19. Even if you're feeling well, it's important to take precautionary steps. This includes:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, including before and after eating
- Using alcohol-based hand sanitisers when hand washing isn't an option
- Covering coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue
- Disposing of tissues immediately after, into a dedicated waste bin and washing your hands
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Cleaning and disinfecting any surfaces you have touched including benches and door handles.

## Are there extra health measures residents should take?

Free flu vaccinations are now available at GPs for anyone aged 65 and over. With the onset of the flu season approaching and the spread of COVID-19 in the community, the government is advising there has never been a more important time to be vaccinated.

While the flu vaccination does not provide immunity against COVID-19, it will protect against various strains of influenza and ensure your health is not compromised.

## How can residents keep in contact with family and friends?

Even though we should physically isolate, it is important residents maintain positive health and wellbeing throughout the pandemic. Social interaction with loved ones is an important part of this. Residents, family members and friends are encouraged to:

- Use phone calls and email to keep conversations going
- Set up video call systems such as Skype or FaceTime to allow you to see your loved ones
- Have one family member visit at a time, maintaining a distance of 1.5m.

## Is there anything residents should report to UnitingSA?

Please notify us immediately on (08) 8449 7085 if you have:

- recently returned from international or interstate travel, OR
- had contact with others who have recently travelled internationally or interstate, OR
- been in contact with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, OR
- symptoms associated with COVID-19 such as fever and/or acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat).

These are all risk factors associated with COVID-19.

Once you make contact, we will discuss your individual situation and any required action.

If you are feeling unwell, we encourage you to seek medical advice from a General Practitioner and follow all directions given. Remember to ring ahead to find out whether the consult can be conducted via the phone or if a face-to-face visit is required. **Always call 000 if you need urgent medical help.**

## Additional resources

There is a lot of information online and in the media about COVID-19 and it can get overwhelming. Here are some key resources that may assist you if you require further advice or support.

- To keep up with the latest Federal Government advice around COVID-19 visit **health.gov.au** or call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on **1800 020 080**.
- For updated advice and alerts related to COVID-19 within South Australia visit **sahealth.sa.gov.au**.
- For mental health support, there are a range of telephone and online services including the SA COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line on **1800 632 753** or Beyond Blue on **1300 224 636**.
- If your needs have changed and you now require in-home care, contact My Aged Care to discuss whether you are eligible for government-subsidised support on **1800 200 422**.
- If you have questions specific to UnitingSA and the information contained in this fact sheet, please contact Seniors Living Coordinator Margaret Richards on **0419 810 201**.