

Information for Disability Residential Services during COVID-19

This document is for disability support workers and people with a disability who live in residential support services.

What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?

COVID-19 a respiratory illness, also known as Coronavirus that is spreading through the Australian community. The virus is easily passed from one person to another through coughing and sneezing or touching surfaces with the virus on it. The virus cannot pass through your skin but can pass through your eyes, mouth and nose.

We have all been asked to stay at home to stop the virus spreading. We can go out to buy food and to go to the doctor. We can also go for a walk by ourselves or with one other person.

Most people that get COVID-19 do not get very sick, but some people get very sick and might need to go to hospital. It is, therefore very important to avoid getting Coronavirus.

People most at risk are people:

- Who have recently travelled overseas
- Who have had close contact with someone who has tested positive to the virus
- Elderly people
- Those with chronic health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and respiratory conditions
- Have a low immunity

How do people with disabilities and support workers stay safe?

1. **Physical distancing:** Stay 1.5 metres away from other people unless you need to help someone, and avoid shaking hands, hugging or kissing.

2. **Washing hands:** Maintain good hand hygiene, wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser, especially:

- Before and after meals
- Before and after touching somebody else
- Before and after touching surfaces or objects shared with others
- After using the toilet
- After sneezing or coughing

What does this mean for the daily life of people with disabilities?

- Avoid being with groups of people including day activities and outings with friends, recommended no more than 2 people
- Avoid places where people gather and meet
- As much as possible, stay at home

What could people with disabilities or support workers be feeling?

All the changes in your life can be hard.

- You may feel confused, anxious, sad, worried, frightened, angry, lonely or bored. Those feelings are normal. This is a difficult time for everyone.



- People may not be able to express their feelings through words, so they may show how they are feeling through change of behaviour.
- Things that might help you feel better:
 - Talking about how you feel with someone you trust.
 - Doing an activity that you enjoy; for example listening to music, playing a game, going for a walk, doing an art or craft activity or watching a movie.

How do people with disabilities stay well at home?

It is important to stay healthy while staying at home. This means:

- Having a **daily routine** is helpful for most people. An example might be: Breakfast, then an Activity, then a Break, then Lunch, then an Activity, then a Break, then Dinner.
- **Staying in contact** with friends and family through the phone, messenger, Skype, Facetime and other platforms.
- **Eating a healthy diet**, including fruit and vegetables.
- **Exercising every day**. Most people should do 30 minutes of exercise that makes them breathe heavily every day.
- **Maintaining** a healthy weight.

Tips for activities at home:

- **Relaxation:** Music, meditation or relaxation sessions.
- **Physical activity:** Stretching exercises, walking, running or wheeling laps in the house or garden; ball games – kicking or throwing a ball, or gardening. If the person with a disability has a Physiotherapist and/or Occupational Therapist involved regularly, contact the therapists for advice.
- **Art and craft:** painting, drawing, craft activities. The internet has many ideas just waiting to be discovered!



- **Cooking:** cooking meals together, baking bread, or occasional sweet treats like cake or biscuits.
- **Building skills in**
 - **Personal care:** dressing, planning, communication.
 - **Domestic tasks:** tidying and cleaning (including own room), laundry etc.

Tips for support workers to monitor health and wellbeing

- Maintain and monitor behaviour charts for changes in behaviours that reflect anxiety, fear, boredom or other emotion
- Maintain a weight chart to monitor weight
- Plan meals in advance to minimise trips to the shops
- Limit people coming into the house
- Extra cleaning of the surfaces in the house to remove the virus

The importance of WIFI

- WIFI is required to enable social contact for people with disabilities with their family and friends through web-based programs like Skype, FaceTime and Messenger.
- WIFI is also important for doctors, therapists and other specialised disability support/health clinics such as the Centre for Developmental Disability Health to enable telehealth.



Who can I contact with questions?

Emergency: 000 (24hrs 7 days)

DHHS Coronavirus Hotline: 1800 675 398 (24hrs 7 days)

Monash Health Residential In Reach Nurse: 1300 4467 3224(24hrs 7 days)

Centre for Developmental Disability Health: 03 9792 7888 (8am-4pm Monday – Thursday)

Resources

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Amaze Community Information:

<https://www.amaze.org.au/2020/03/covid-19-coronavirus-amaze-community-information/>

NDIA COVID-19 Easy Read Information:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/2194/download>

World Health Organisation COVID-19 Advice for the public:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Australian Government for information: *www.australia.gov.au*

