

Dear Colleagues

Early indications show that influenza is circulating in the community alongside COVID-19. With winter fast approaching, it is important to protect our most vulnerable, including residents of residential aged care facilities (RACFs).

Vaccination is an important tool for protecting residents of RACFs and I encourage you to ensure that your patients are up to date with their COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations.

As you are aware, administration of antiviral treatment soon after symptom onset for people with COVID-19 or influenza can reduce disease severity. Additionally, the administration of influenza antivirals to residents of RACFs after exposure improves clinical outcomes and assists in controlling the outbreak.

I am writing to encourage you to pre-assess residents for their suitability for antivirals to facilitate early administration in the event of a COVID-19 or influenza outbreak in their facility.

The Commonwealth Department of Health has distributed oseltamivir and molnupiravir to RACFs for use in residents. To assist with this, NSW Health has enacted legislation to permit RACFs to hold and store both these medications. Molnupiravir and nirmatrelvir/ritonavir are now also available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for RACFs through their community pharmacy.

I encourage you to review your patients in RACFs and assess their suitability for the use of oseltamivir, molnupiravir and nirmatrelvir/ritonavir. The range of supporting documents include:

- [Antiviral Pre-assessment Form](#). This form includes a section for the resident (or their guardian) to complete and indicate their preference for antiviral medication. The pre-assessment form will not replace the requirement for a GP to prescribe the medication prior to administration but it will expedite access to the medication for post exposure prophylaxis and for treatment of confirmed cases.
- [Advice for antiviral treatments and prophylaxis in Residential Aged Care Facilities \(RACF\) 2022](#). A fact sheet for clinicians providing guidance on oseltamivir, nirmatrelvir/ritonavir and molnupiravir.
- [Flu and COVID-19 antiviral treatment](#) A fact sheet for residents of RACFs and their families to help guide decisions about using antivirals.

This information is concurrently being distributed to providers of RACFs.

Thank you again for your efforts in keeping the community safe and protecting our most vulnerable from COVID-19 and influenza.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Chant PSM
Chief Health Officer and Deputy Secretary
Population and Public Health
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