



# Outbreak Management Plan

## Key features

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Australian Government  
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Engage  
Empower  
Safeguard

This document can help aged care providers prepare a comprehensive outbreak management plan (OMP). It explains common sections found in OMPs and can help you develop one tailored to your service. While this guide has a structure you can follow, each OMP should be created to meet the unique needs, circumstances, and risks of your service. You can use this document as a starting point to prepare your OMP and adapt it as you need. Each key feature suggests what you could include under the headings, but these are not the only options.

# OMP stages

An OMP is divided into 4 stages. Each stage has specific actions and responsibilities that reduce the impact of an outbreak. These stages make sure that your service:

- is prepared to manage outbreaks
- responds quickly
- contains infections
- reviews your actions to keep improving.

## The 4 stages

### 1. Prevent and prepare

This stage focuses on ways you can prevent an outbreak. It makes sure that you have staff, resources, and protocols ready to handle a possible outbreak. This can include training, stockpiling necessary supplies, and identifying key personnel.

### 2. Respond

Once you identify an outbreak in this stage the focus shifts to immediate responses. These responses include:

- a. identifying the source of the outbreak
- b. isolating people who are affected
- c. following infection control processes
- d. communicating with staff, older people and external stakeholders.

### 3. Stand-down

The stand-down stage starts once the outbreak is over. This includes returning to normal operations while making sure that you complete all the necessary health checks and post-outbreak assessments.

### 4. Evaluate

After the outbreak, do a thorough evaluation of the response. This includes:

- a. reviewing how effective the OMP was
- b. identifying where you can improve
- c. updating the plan based on what you've learned to help you to be better prepared for future outbreaks.

You need to communicate the revised plan to staff and all relevant people, so everyone is aware of, and follows, the updated procedures.

# Key features of an OMP

## 1. Outbreak management team (OMT)

The OMT lead and manage the OMP when there's an outbreak. You need to clearly record and communicate the roles and the responsibilities of the OMT.

### Information to include and consider for your OMP

The structure of your OMT, including roles, positions and responsibilities of people in general operations and during an outbreak.

Who is the [infection prevention and control \(IPC\) lead](#)? All residential aged care services must have an ongoing IPC lead on site. An IPC lead advises on and oversees what an aged care service needs to do to prevent and respond to infectious diseases. The IPC lead is an ongoing role. Residential services must include the role in their regular operations to build IPC capability.

## 2. Preparation and prevention

Preparation and prevention focus on what you will do to reduce the risk of an outbreak.

### Information to include and consider for your OMP

What is an outbreak and what identifies an infection outbreak

Overview of your risk management in IPC

Structure and how you use policies and procedures

[Risk assessment and management in IPC](#) – your IPC system should cover managing risk for:

- older people
- the care environment
- aged care workers
- delivering care
- equipment
- visitors and carers.

IPC measures including:

- hand hygiene
- standard and transmission-based precautions
- personal protective equipment (PPE) like donning and doffing and maintaining stock levels of PPE.

OMP drills for testing and being prepared

Vaccination programs

Declaring an outbreak is over

### 3. Response procedures

Response procedures explain what you need to do once you have identified an outbreak. This section makes sure that you follow the necessary steps quickly and effectively to control the spread of infection.

#### Information to include and consider for your OMP

- Activating your OMT
- Strategies to isolate and group people together
- Your process for notifying stakeholders
- How you've communicated with older people, families, staff and stakeholders
- Pathology testing
- Using work processes, guidelines or education to reduce the risk
- Reviewing the controls – the OMT should keep reviewing how effective your control processes are to reduce the risk of spreading infection.

### 4. Environmental services

Environmental services help stop infection from spreading. Regularly cleaning surfaces, along with proper processes for handling linen, laundry, and waste, reduces contamination and maintains a safe environment.

#### Information to include and consider for your OMP

- Environmental cleaning
- Cleaning and disinfection procedures
- Laundry
- Waste management

## 5. Continuity of care for older people

OMPs should include strategies to stop or reduce the impact of an outbreak on your service. This helps make sure the care and services you deliver are safe, high quality and meet the needs and preferences of the people in your care. Continuity of care is about you providing the same high-quality care over time, including when the service experiences extra challenges like managing an outbreak.

It's important to plan for care when older people may be quarantined in their rooms. Without this planning, there is a higher risk of negative outcomes, such as developing pressure injuries. You should make sure that you tailor interim care plans to the specific needs and circumstances of the older person during these times. This will help you to reduce these risks and maintain high-quality care.

### Information to include and consider for your OMP

The movement of each older person  
New admissions  
Unvaccinated older people  
Managing health, wellbeing and social isolation  
Antiviral medications  
Palliative care and end of life care  
Supporting older people with dementia and high care needs

## 6. Staff management

Staff management covers how you deploy, train, and support staff during an outbreak. Effective staff management helps:

- maintain staffing levels
- make sure staff are safe
- stop burnout during outbreaks.

### Information to include and consider for your OMP

Set up workforce capacity and contingency planning for when staff are absent  
General staff roles and responsibilities during an outbreak  
Staff movement  
Unvaccinated staff  
Training and education

## 7. Communication

Communication lists your strategies for keeping everyone informed during an outbreak. A clear communication strategy should cover all relevant stakeholders, for example:

- internal staff
- external contractors
- older people
- their families
- local health authorities
- the media.

Effective communication is an important part of outbreak management planning. It makes sure you share timely and accurate information, which is essential for quick responses and decision-making. Clear communication helps coordinate work, reduce confusion, and maintain trust with staff, older people, families, and external agencies. You should consider communicating with:

- staff
- older people
- their families
- local health authorities
- infection control specialists
- relevant government bodies.

This makes sure everyone knows the processes for preventing outbreaks, as well as outbreak status, and the necessary actions. This gives you a collaborative and comprehensive way to manage an outbreak.

### Information to include and consider for your OMP

- Notification process
- Internal and external communication processes
- Communication templates
- Outbreak alert signs
- Managing families and visitors

## 8. Review and continuous improvement

Review and continuous improvement focus on evaluating how you responded to the outbreak and identifying where you can improve. Regularly reviewing your OMP and including things you have learned from past experiences makes sure the plan is effective and up to date.

Continually improving quality in aged care means improving the quality of care and services for older people and focuses on changes that you can make that will reduce the risk of spreading infections. Improvement interventions can:

- improve the quality of care
- protect aged care workers
- reduce financial costs
- support environmental sustainability
- improve the use of resources.

### Information to include and consider for your OMP

- Regular review of OMP
- Including feedback from past outbreaks
- Resources

## Resources

1. [The Aged Care Infection Prevention and Control Guide](#)
2. [National Outbreak Management Guideline for Acute Respiratory Infection \(including COVID-19, influenza and RSV\) in Residential Aged Care Homes](#)
3. [Outbreak Coordinator's Handbook – Gastroenteritis Kit for Aged Care](#)



*The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders both past and present.*

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