

Recognising potential acute respiratory infection outbreaks

Quick reference guide

Early recognition of acute respiratory infection (ARI) ensures a rapid and effective outbreak response.

ARI definition

Recent onset of new or worsening acute respiratory symptoms:

- cough, breathing difficulty, sore throat, or runny nose/nasal congestion, with or without other symptoms

Other symptoms include:

- headaches, muscle aches, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea or vomiting and diarrhoea
- Loss of smell and taste can also occur with COVID-19
- fever ($\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$) may occur in elderly individuals
- new onset or increase in confusion, change in baseline behaviour, falling, or exacerbation of underlying chronic illness (e.g. shortness of breath in someone with congestive heart failure)

ARI outbreak definition

- 2 or more residents test positive for influenza, COVID-19 or RSV within a 72-hour period
- 2 or more epidemiologically linked ARIs in residents within a 72-hour period (where influenza, COVID-19 and RSV have been excluded)

Reference: *Communicable Disease Network Australia—National outbreak management guideline for acute respiratory infection (including COVID-19, influenza and RSV) in residential aged care homes.*

Preparing for early recognition of ARI outbreaks

- Ensure staff know the clinical criteria to recognise ARI
- Commence heightened ARI surveillance for residents and staff Apr-Oct
- Implement a process for staff to monitor and report ARI
- Identify staff to assess reported ARI cases for potential outbreaks (daily)

Actions when an outbreak definition is met

- Isolate resident cases and exclude staff cases from the facility
- Activate your facility's ARI outbreak management plan
- Notify Metro North Public Health Unit within 24 hours:
 - Mon–Fri, 8:30am–5pm
3624 1111 or MNPHU_CD@health.qld.gov.au
 - After hours ph: 3646 1699 (on-call Public Health Physician)

Clinical support and advice:

Contact your local RADAR Team:

8am–4.30pm, 7 days a week

RADAR RBWH: 3647 4627

RADAR TPCH: 3139 6896

RADAR Redcliffe: 3049 6868

RADAR Caboolture: 5316 5444

ED substitution care:

Contact Metro North OPEN Team:

8am–8pm, 7 days a week

1300 072 327

Metro North Health's vision

Creating healthier futures together—where innovation and research meets compassionate care and community voices shape our services.