



Guidance on the Transfer of Hospitalised Patients from an Acute Hospital to a Residential Care Facility in the Context of the Global COVID-19 Epidemic

1. Introduction

The emergence and spread of COVID-19 disease has raised concerns regarding risks related to transfer for patients between acute hospital services and residential care facilities (RCF). There is a concern that patient movement may result in the introduction of the disease from an acute hospital to a RCF. Experience is limited at present and advice issued regarding the safe transfer of patients from one healthcare facility to another can be expected to change as the picture evolves. Therefore, this advice is likely to change as the conditions determined by the outbreak change. It is important therefore that all staff in RCFs pay close attention to guidance issued in this area through www.hpsc.ie.

The following key points are relevant to the guidance:

1. The virus is shed from the respiratory tract of infected patients and infection is acquired when the virus reaches the eyes, nose or mouth of another person.
2. Virus shedding is probably greatest around the time the patient has symptoms. There is evidence that some patients may shed the virus before they develop symptoms.
3. Patients who have acquired infection generally develop symptoms within a week but symptoms may not manifest for up to 14 days.
4. Infection has been associated with severe disease in a high proportion of older people with pre-existing health problems.
5. Appropriate placement of patients/residents and good infection prevention and control practice can be expected to reduce the risk of spread in any setting.

2. Categories of Hospital Transferring to a RCF with No Evidence of Spread of COVID-19

A. Hospitals with no evidence of spread of COVID-19 within the hospital

(note this includes hospitals where cases of COVID-19 have been cared for but where there is no evidence of spread)

For hospitals with no evidence of spread of COVID-19 within the hospital patient transfers to RCF should operate as normal at this time, except that patients with respiratory tract infection that conforms to the current national criteria for testing for COVID-19 should be tested and have a sample reported as virus not-detected before transfer to a RCF.

B. Hospitals with evidence of spread of COVID-19 within the hospital

1. Asymptomatic patients not identified as Contacts of COVID-19

Transfers to RCF should operate as normal at this time except that patients with hospital acquired respiratory tract infection that conforms to the current national criteria for testing for COVID-19 should be tested and have a sample reported as not-detected before transfer to at RCF.

2. Asymptomatic patients identified as Contacts of COVID-19

Transfers to RCF should proceed provided that the RCF has a facility to provide the resident with an en-suite single room and the resident is able to accept and adhere to staying in their room for the period required to bring them to 14 days since they had Contact. For example a patient transferred on day 7 post Contact would require an additional 7 days staying in their room after transfer to the RCF.

Contact patients transferred would require active monitoring to complete the period of 14 days. If the resident develops any symptoms of respiratory tract infection during the specified period they will require testing.

3. Symptomatic patients identified as Contacts of COVID-19

Transfers to RCF should proceed provided that the resident has had a sample reported as not-detected and RCF has a facility to provide the resident with an en-suite single room and the resident is able to accept and adhere to staying in their room for the period required to bring them to 14 days since they had Contact. For example a patient transferred on day 7 post Contact would require an additional 7 days staying in their room after transfer to the RCF.

Contact patients transferred would require active monitoring to complete the period of 14 days. If the resident develops any new symptoms of respiratory tract infection during the specified period they will require re-testing.

4. Patients with COVID-19 disease

Transfers to RCF should normally be delayed until the resident has had two consecutive respiratory samples reported as virus not detected.

3. Categories of RCF Transferring to an Acute Hospital

A. RCF with No Evidence of Spread of COVID-19

(note this includes RCF where cases of COVID-19 have been cared for but where there is no evidence of spread)

For RCF with no evidence of spread of COVID-19 within the hospital patient transfers to hospital should operate as normal at this time except that patients with respiratory tract infection should be discussed with the receiving hospital in advance of transfer.

B. RCF with Evidence of Spread of COVID-19 within the RCF

1. Asymptomatic patients not identified as Contacts of COVID-19

Transfers to hospital should operate as normal at this time except that patients with features of a new respiratory tract infection should be identified to the hospital as high risk patients.

2. Asymptomatic patients identified as Contacts of COVID-19

Transfers to hospital should proceed if essential for patient care however patients should be identified to the hospital as high risk patients.

Contact patients transferred would require active monitoring to complete the period of 14 days. If the resident develops any symptoms of respiratory tract infection during the specified period they will require testing.

3. Symptomatic patients identified as Contacts of COVID-19

Transfers to hospital should proceed if essential for patient care however patients should be identified to the hospital as high risk patients.

4. Patients with COVID-19 disease

Transfers to hospital should proceed if essential for patient care however patients should be identified to the hospital as high risk patients.

Note. In this context "asymptomatic" means having no symptoms or signs of new respiratory tract infection.

