Surging Covid-19 cases here mean it is crucial for seniors to get their vaccinations soon, while holdouts need to relook their stance urgently, health experts here said.

Unvaccinated seniors in nursing homes are at particular risk of severe illness should they get infected, with experts warning that more clusters are likely to arise in aged care facilities given the communal living environment and the footfall of staff changing shifts.

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Professor Dale Fisher, a senior infectious diseases consultant at the National University Hospital, urged relatives of unvaccinated seniors in nursing homes to ensure their space and get their elders vaccinated as soon as possible, as there is a higher risk of severe illness should they get infected.

“Efforts may need to be stepped up to keep nursing homes safe as infection can spread easily among the seniors, given the transmission in the community,” Dr Fisher said.

“Those with comorbidities who are unvaccinated should get their two doses over the next month, and those who are already vaccinated should opt for a booster shot,” he added.

Precautionary measures have been stepped up at nursing homes after more than 100 Covid-19 cases were detected among staff and residents in aged-care facilities over the past week.

There were 1,012 new cases in Singapore on Sunday, the second day in a row that new Covid-19 cases passed the four-digit mark.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) announced earlier this month that all visits to residential care homes would be suspended until Oct 15 to minimise the risk of transmission. A spokesman for Jamiyah Nursing Home, which reported 10 cases – three staff and 12 residents – said the premises, in Pasir Panjang Road, has worked closely with MOH and the Agency for Integrated Care to test residents and staff for Covid-19.

“We understand that this development may cause concern. We seek your understanding to give us the space and time to focus on the health and well-being of our residents and staff,” she said.

Residential homes for the elderly, including adult disability homes, nursing homes and welfare homes, underwent mass testing for all residents and staff to detect infections early and ring-fence any clusters.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Asia Health Management Summit at the Nanyang Technological University yesterday, Singapore’s director of Medical Services Kenneth Mak said the Government was working to increase the percentage of vaccinated clients and residents in nursing homes.

He said: “We have made quite significant improvements, many of them are vaccinated now, so that is good, but we could do better because there are still some who have not been vaccinated, often because either they object themselves or their families have not agreed to give permission for their loved one to be vaccinated.”

Infectious diseases expert Leong Hoo Nai cited staff changing shifts at nursing homes, communal activities and visits by next of kin as some reasons clusters could have surfaced at nursing homes prior to the suspension of visits.

Dr Leong said that those who are unvaccinated should complete the vaccine series as soon as possible, not just to protect themselves, but also to ensure that the healthcare system does not become overwhelmed.

“The statistics speak clearly: Those who are not vaccinated require hospital care, and deprive someone else of a much-needed hospital bed. It deprives a vaccinated individual who developed an infectious disease of the chance for treatment.”

He added: “If we say no to vaccination, others, especially when healthcare resources are now limited.”

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### Vaccination vital amid rising Covid-19 cases as clusters likely to form in nursing homes

**Malavika Menon**

With Covid-19 cases rising in the community, getting vaccinated is now a matter of life and death for seniors here, experts said. Health experts warn that more clusters are likely to form in nursing homes, given the close proximity among seniors who are residents in these homes and the regular footfall of staff changing shifts.

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### Covid-19 cases reported in nursing homes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nursing home</th>
<th>Residents with Covid-19</th>
<th>Staff with Covid-19</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands Care Home</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor Convent Home</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il Ai Sia Nursing Home</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamiyah Nursing Home</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Valley Nursing Home (Simei)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ren Ci Nursing Home (Simei)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Numbers are based on available figures from MOH reports as at Sept 19.

Source: MINISTRY OF HEALTH, STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

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