

Congregate Living Facilities Guidelines

When people live together in groups, illnesses can be spread among residents. This is particularly true for influenza, which is a serious illness and can be the cause of hospitalization and death, especially in elderly people or persons with underlying health and/or psychiatric issues. As a congregate living facility, management is responsible for providing a safe living environment, and can help to prevent flu outbreaks. Facilities should be ready to respond quickly to an actual or potential outbreak among their residents.

General information about influenza

- Influenza, or “flu” is a respiratory illness. The symptoms are fever, cough, sore throat, headache and body aches. Some people can have nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea, but the main symptoms are respiratory.
- Incubation period (the time from when you are exposed to when you get sick): one to four days.
- Adults are contagious from one day prior to start of symptoms until as long as seven days after start of symptoms. Influenza can be spread even before symptoms develop.
- Outbreaks of influenza can occur even when most of the people in the facility get their flu shots. The effectiveness of the flu vaccine is different each season, depending on the viruses that may be circulating and how well the vaccine is “matched” to the season’s viruses.
- Influenza vaccine is most effective in children and younger, healthy individuals; it is least effective in the elderly and immune compromised. That is why it is important that staff be vaccinated, because it helps to protect those around them that may not respond as well to the vaccine.
- Antiviral medications can be given to treat influenza. The medications are most effective if given within two days of the onset of symptoms.
- Antiviral treatment is recommended for anyone who is at high risk for flu-related complications (elderly, diabetics, pregnant women, persons with other health problems).
- Antiviral medications can be given to people who have been exposed to the flu to prevent flu from developing. For outbreaks in group living facilities, antivirals can be given to roommates or other residents in the facility to try to prevent the outbreak from spreading.

Reporting to Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department

- Outbreaks of disease should be reported to the Health Department. Please call us if any of your residents or staff are diagnosed with influenza. We want to help you prevent or manage illness outbreaks.
- Call (253) 798-6534 to report, or during business hours call (253) 798-6410, press “0” for an operator, and ask to speak to a nurse.
- After hours, we are available through our answering service at (253) 798-6410.
- Influenza-associated deaths are also reportable to the Health Department. Call (253) 798-6534 to report.

Preventing Influenza at Your Facility

- Encourage all staff to get a flu vaccine. Staff are most likely to get their flu vaccine if it is provided at work, at no cost or minimal cost. Many companies provide on-site flu shot clinics (see flu immunization resource brochure, Appendix A).

- Encourage all residents to get a flu shot at their health care provider office or at a pharmacy. You could also call a vaccine provider to see if they would do a clinic at the facility. Many companies offer on-site services and will bill the resident's insurance (see flu immunization resource brochure, Appendix A).
- During flu season, post signs at entry asking visitors to not visit if they are ill. If an outbreak is occurring, post signs that warn visitors to take precautions. See Appendix B and C for samples of signs that you can use.
- Ask staff to stay home from work if they are sick. Staff diagnosed with influenza should not come to work until they have been without fever for 24 hours (without the help of fever-reducing medicines).
- Have hand sanitizer and tissues available at several locations in the facility and encourage staff, residents and visitors to clean their hands frequently.
- Have hand sanitizer available at entry and ask visitors to use it when they arrive.

Detecting an outbreak

The flu season can start as early as October and lasts through the end of April, although cases can occur year round and outbreaks have happened outside of that time period. Please call the Health Department for further guidance if:

- Influenza is diagnosed by a lab test in at least one resident.
- Two or more residents in the facility or an area of the facility (e.g., separate unit) develop fever with respiratory symptoms during a one-week period.

During influenza season, if several residents within a short time frame have fever and respiratory symptoms, it is likely that influenza is the cause, even if the ill residents had been vaccinated.

What to Do if Outbreak is Suspected

- Report outbreak to the Health Department (253) 798-6410 for specific guidance.
 - Please try to have the following information available: how many people are ill, what are the main symptoms, date symptoms started, results of any flu testing, have any people been hospitalized.
- Refer people with fever and respiratory symptoms to their doctor or an urgent care. The resident should ask their doctor for a test for influenza.
- Place extra emphasis on hand washing and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizers for both staff and residents.
- Monitor the situation closely. Ask residents and staff about symptoms of fever, cough, body aches.

If Influenza Outbreak is Confirmed

- Residents diagnosed with influenza or have symptoms of influenza should avoid contact with other residents until seven days after the start of symptoms.
 - Usually that means residents with flu should stay in their room or apartment, and take meals in their room and not participate in any group activities.
 - If residents are asked to stay in their rooms, check on them daily. Refer to health care provider as needed.
- Limit or halt group activities, which may include closing the dining room.
- Notify visitors of outbreak with signs. Encourage visitors to practice hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Check for illness in staff and ask them to stay home if they are sick.
- Notify all residents that an outbreak is occurring so that they can take the necessary prevention measures. This can be done by a letter on their door, phone call, announcement, etc. See attached sample letter to notify residents (Appendix D).
- Encourage residents to seek health care right away if they develop symptoms of flu.
- Consider contacting health care providers for preventive antiviral medication.
 - If your facility has a nurse or health services, the nurse or health care staff could assist the residents in contacting their health care provider for preventive medication. A form letter to health care providers is attached (Appendix E).

- Residents could ask their doctor for prevention medicines.
- The most popular medication to treat flu or prevent flu during a facility outbreak is called Tamiflu. Residents who are in fragile health may want to ask their health care provider to prescribe Tamiflu for prevention in the event of an outbreak, even if they have no symptoms.
- Continue to encourage influenza vaccine to unimmunized staff and patients.
- Encourage everyone to frequently wash hands and cover coughs and sneezes.
- Increase cleaning of high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, hand rails and countertops. Flu germs are easily killed by most household cleaners or dilute bleach solution.

References:

CDC Influenza Page- www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm

CDC Infection Control in Health Care Facilities www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/index.htm

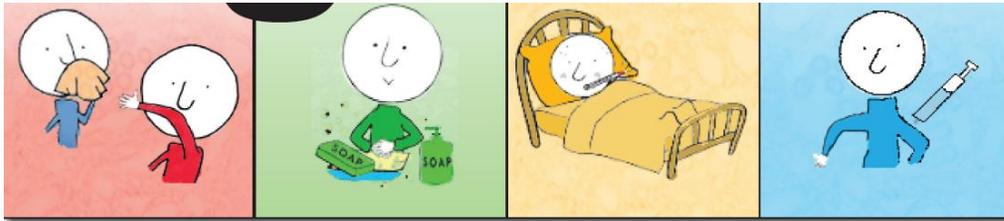
Appendix A

List of immunization Providers

Business Name	Area(s) Served	Contact Information
Costco Pharmacy	<i>You can purchase Flu Shot Cards to give to your employees. Unused cards will be refunded at end of March.</i>	(425) 427-7294 Email: bulkcards@costco.com
DuPont Pharmacy, Inc	Pierce and Thurston Counties	(253) 964-3400 www.dupontpharmacy.com
Fred Meyer Pharmacies	<i>You can purchase Flu Shot Cards to give to your employees.</i>	(877) 904-2415 www.fredmeyer.com/pharmacy
GetAFluShot.com	Washington and Oregon	(503) 258-9800 www.getaflushot.com
HealthForce Occ-Med	Seattle Tacoma Metropolitan area	(425) 468-6510 www.healthforcepartners.com
Kirk's Pharmacy	Eatonville, Sunrise Medical Campus Heartland Medical Campus	(360) 832-3121 www.kirksparmacy.com
Lincoln Pharmacy LLC	King, Pierce, Thurston Counties	(253) 722-6099 www.lincolnrx.com
Maxim Health Systems	All 50 States	(310) 329-5899 www.maximhealthcare.com
Mega Pharmacy	Tacoma	(253) 507-7492 www.megapharmacy.org
Rite Aide	Pierce County, Washington	(253) 474-8500 www.tinyurl.com/riteaidflu
Rxpress Pharmacy	Bonney Lake	(253) 862-5000 www.rxpress-pharmacy.com
Seattle Visiting Nurse Association	Washington State	(425) 967-3080 www.seattlevna.com
Union Ave Compounding Pharmacy	Within 10 mile radius	(253) 752-1705 www.unionavenuerx.com
Walgreens Workplace Health And Pharmacy	Upon Request	www.walgreens.com/flu
Walmart (in partnership with OccuVax)	All 50 states	1-800-558-5754 www.tinyurl.com/WalmartFlu www.occuvax.com

NOTICE

Family & Friends Shouldn't Visit If Experiencing Respiratory Or Flu-like Symptoms



**Cover
your
cough!**

**Wash
your
hands.**

**Stay home
when sick.**

**Get
vaccinated.**

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/index.html

NOTICE

Flu season is here and to protect our residents:



What can you do?

- 1** Practice Respiratory Etiquette
- 2** Clean Your Hands Frequently
- 3** Family and Friends Should Not Visit if Experiencing Respiratory or Flu-Like Symptoms

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Appendix E

Facility Letterhead

Date

To: Name of Community, Residents and Staff

Several residents have been diagnosed with influenza (the flu). Influenza can be a very serious illness, causing fever, cough, sore throat and body aches. It can lead to pneumonia and other complications, especially in seniors.

At this time, there is a lot of influenza going around in the community. The Health Department recommends these prevention measures to try to stop the spread of the flu:

- Report illness with fever and respiratory symptoms to your staff here and your doctor. Make sure your doctor is aware of the outbreak. Your doctor may want to treat you with a medication called Tamiflu for influenza if you are ill with symptoms of influenza.
- Tamiflu can also be taken when there is an outbreak of flu in the assisted living. You can call your doctor to ask for this medicine as a prevention during the outbreak.
- Wash hands frequently and use hand sanitizers between hand washings.
- Do not attend activities and meals if you don't feel well. Ask for your meal to be delivered.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow. Don't leave used tissues lying around.
- Get vaccinated for the flu if you have not already had your flu shot this season.
- Staff who are ill with cough, sore throat and fever should stay home from work until they are fully recovered and 24 hours without any fever.

If you have any more questions, you may call (Name Informational Resources, Staff Or Health Department).

Appendix F

Facility Letterhead

Date

To: Dr. _____
From: Insert Name and Phone #, Responsible Person

Your patient, _____ DOB _____ resides at (name of facility or community). An influenza outbreak has been confirmed at our facility. Give brief detail of outbreak. Example- *Three people from XX have been hospitalized for pneumonia. Four of the people who are ill have tested positive for influenza.* The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department is helping us to control this outbreak and gave us the following information.

During outbreaks of influenza at group living facilities, The Centers for Disease Control recommends that all residents take preventive antiviral medication, even if they have had a seasonal flu vaccination. Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) is the most frequently used medication, and is prescribed as follows:

- **Chemoprophylaxis of Influenza-** Oseltamivir 75 mg once daily. For control of outbreaks in long-term care facilities and hospitals, CDC recommends antiviral chemoprophylaxis for a minimum of two weeks and up to one week after the most recent known case was identified
- **Treatment of Influenza-** Oseltamivir 75 mg twice daily for five days. Recommended duration for antiviral treatment is five days. Treatment is most effective if started within 48 hours of onset of symptoms. Longer treatment courses can be considered for patients who remain severely ill after five days of treatment.

A reduction in the dose of oseltamivir is recommended for persons with creatinine clearance <30 mL/min. For patients with creatinine clearance of 10–30 mL per minute, a reduction of the treatment dosage of oseltamivir to 75 mg once daily and in the chemoprophylaxis dosage to 75 mg every other day is recommended.

Reference:

- Antiviral Agents for the Treatment and Chemoprophylaxis of Influenza
- Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), *MMWR Recommendations and Reports*. January 21, 2011 / 60(RR01); 1–24. www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6001a1.htm