STATE OF WASHINGTON

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ALTSA: CCRSS #2026-023
ALTSA: ESF #2026-032
ALTSA: ICF/IID #2026-013
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COVID-19, Influenza, RSV, and Pneumococcal Vaccination Reminder

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent:

Flu, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are highly contagious illnesses with increases in circulation between the months of October through March. In fact, emergency department activity for COVID-19 and influenza are currently rising throughout Washington. Pneumococcal disease is the most common cause of pneumonia and is known to spread throughout this time of year as well. It is possible to become infected with more than one of these illnesses, sometimes at the same time. Prepare for the upcoming respiratory illness season with vaccination.

The flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumococcal vaccines are the best protection against these illnesses. Vaccines help to lower the risk of becoming infected and can decrease the risk of severe illness if infected. Vaccinations help protect you, essential health care workers, and your residents/clients.

To minimize the impact of COVID-19, flu, RSV, and pneumococcal disease in your facility/home:

1. **Encourage ALL residents/clients and staff to stay up to date on their COVID-19 and flu vaccines as soon as possible AND encourage eligible residents/clients and staff to get the RSV and pneumococcal vaccines as needed.**

    - **COVID-19 vaccine:** Everyone 6 months and older should get an updated COVID-19 vaccine. Children and adults at higher risk for severe illness or with weak immune systems should get 1 or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine. Adults age 65 years and older should get 2 doses of an updated COVID-19 vaccine at least 2 months apart, regardless of COVID-19 vaccine history.

      Washington's COVID-19 vaccine standing order allows people 6 months and older in Washington to receive a COVID-19 vaccine without needing an individual prescription. Visit COVID-19 Vaccine Information for up-to-date information.

    - **Flu vaccine:** Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every year in the Fall. Adults age 65 years and older are recommended to get these preferred flu vaccines: Fluzone High-Dose, Fluad adjuvanted, Flublok recombinant, or mFlusiva mRNA. Visit flufreewa.org for more information.

- **RSV vaccine:** All adults 75 years and older, adults 50-74 at increased risk (weak immune systems, chronic medical conditions, or live in nursing homes or other medical facilities), and adults 19 and older with a weak immune system should get 1 dose of RSV vaccine. Visit Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) for more information.

- **Pneumococcal vaccine:** There are different vaccines that are recommended, depending on a person's age and risk factors. Visit Pneumococcal Disease and Vaccine for more information.

2. **Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently.** Many of the healthy habits used to prevent flu also help prevent RSV, COVID-19, and pneumococcal illness.
3. **Consider wearing a face mask.** Masks may help prevent people who have respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 from spreading to others. Visit What To Do When You Are Sick With COVID-19 or Another Respiratory Virus for more information.
4. **Stay home and away from others if sick.** Prevent the spread of illness by having policies or protocols in place for staff to stay home if they are experiencing symptoms of a respiratory viral illness. Visit What To Do When You Are Sick With COVID-19 or Another Respiratory Virus for more information.
5. **Be familiar with the reporting and notification rules for your setting. Contact your local health jurisdiction (LHJ) whenever a resident/client tests positive for COVID-19 or flu, or if you see a sudden increase in acute respiratory illness (two or more ill residents/clients within 72 hours).** Your LHJ can advise on testing, antiviral treatment, prophylaxis, and infection control. Visit doh.wa.gov/localhealth to find your LHJ. If your long-term care setting rules require you to notify the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), use the online reporting tool or call the hotline at 1-800-562-6078.
6. **Review your facility/home's ability to implement infection prevention standards and meet the health care needs of residents/clients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or flu.** A facility/home can admit/readmit a recently ill resident/client if the facility determines they can meet all care and service needs AND follow infection control standards. For infection control guidance, visit Updated CDC Respiratory Virus Guidance for Long-Term Care Providers and Reporting Reminders.

Thank you for your continued efforts to help fight flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumococcal disease.

Sincerely,

Amy Abbot, Director
Residential Care Services
Department of Social Health Services

Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, MD MPH
State Health Officer
Washington Department of Health

Think of it as your best defense. Get a flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumococcal vaccine.