



## STATE OF WASHINGTON

September 24, 2020

**ALTSA: AFH #2020-045**  
**ALTSA: ALF #2020-045**  
**ALTSA: NH #2020-068**  
**ALTSA: CCRSS #2020-035**  
**ALTSA: ICF/IID #2020-035**  
**ALTSA: ESF #2020-034**

### **INFLUENZA AND PNEUMOCOCCAL REMINDER**

Dear Provider/Superintendent/Administrator:

**It is more important than ever to protect your residents/clients and staff from flu and pneumonia during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Flu and COVID-19 are both highly contagious and expected to circulate in Washington this fall. Staff, visitors, and newly admitted residents can easily bring these illnesses into your facility/home. Your residents/clients can develop severe illness from flu and COVID-19 including complications like pneumonia. Some of these illnesses can be fatal. Learn more about the [similarities and differences](#) between flu and COVID-19.

**The flu vaccine is your best protection against the flu.** Since it is possible to have flu or other respiratory illnesses AND COVID-19 at the same time, the flu vaccine will lower one's risk for flu, help protect essential health care workers, and help save limited health care resources for those who need it most. **To minimize the impact of flu and pneumonia in your facility/home:**

**1. Encourage ALL residents/clients and staff to get the flu vaccine by the end of October, AND encourage residents/clients and staff to get the pneumococcal vaccine as needed.** The flu vaccine is updated every year to protect against the most common strains. Fall is the best time to get vaccinated because it ensures protection before flu begins to circulate widely. There are specific flu vaccines for those aged 65 years and older, such as [Fluzone High-Dose](#) and [FLUAD](#), which are intended to give additional protection from flu. Pneumococcal and flu vaccines can be given at the same time or staff who have not been vaccinated before the end of October should get vaccinated as soon as possible. Review the [interim guidance for immunization services](#) to help plan for the safe administration of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on immunizations for seniors, visit [www.doh.wa.gov/Immunization/Seniors](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Immunization/Seniors).

**2. Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently.** Many of the [healthy habits used to prevent flu](#) also help prevent [COVID-19](#). Promote proper hand-washing among your staff and residents/clients to minimize germs.

**3. Wear a face mask.** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is a [requirement](#) for everyone (residents/clients, staff, and visitors) to cover their mouth and nose with a mask when around others (except for persons who have an exemption). Masks may help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading this virus (and other viruses) to others.

Protect your health with the flu shot, and promote healthy aging and brain health.  
Learn more at [www.alz.org/help-support/brain-health/10-ways-to-love-your-brain](http://www.alz.org/help-support/brain-health/10-ways-to-love-your-brain)

**4. Call your local health department whenever a resident /client tests positive for flu. Also call if you see a sudden increase in acute respiratory illness (two or more ill residents/clients within 72 hours).** Your local health department can advise on testing, antiviral treatment, prophylaxis, and infection control. Visit [www.doh.wa.gov/localhealth](http://www.doh.wa.gov/localhealth) to find your local health department. Long-term care facilities have experience managing respiratory infections and outbreaks among residents/clients and staff and should apply the same outbreak management principles to COVID-19.

**5. Report a suspected outbreak of flu or any other communicable disease to the Department of Social and Health Services [online](#) or by calling 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 flu or COVID-19.** 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 [www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/fluoutbrk-LTCF.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/fluoutbrk-LTCF.pdf). You can also view the [recommendations for long-term care facilities during COVID-19](#) for COVID-19 response guidance. The following additional resources can help you prepare for heightened flu activity:

- Department of Health: [www.knockoutflu.org](http://www.knockoutflu.org)
- Department of Social and Health Services: See Flu Information/Adult Immunization Resources at [www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/residential-care-services](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/residential-care-services)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) and [www.cdc.gov/Features/Pneumonia](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Pneumonia)
- Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) Vaccine Recommendations: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs)

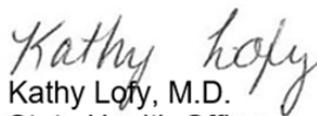
We encourage you to continue to adhere to the **Standards for Adult Immunization**, which include routinely **assessing** the immunization status of all residents/clients and **strongly recommending** and encouraging vaccines based on the needs of each resident/client. If your facility/home provides immunizations, please **administer** and **document** all vaccines given. If your facility/home does *not* provide immunizations, please **refer** residents/clients to a vaccination provider and **document** that vaccines were given. For more information about the **Standards for Adult Immunizations**, visit [www.doh.wa.gov/Immunization/Adult/StandardsforAdultImmunizationPractice](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Immunization/Adult/StandardsforAdultImmunizationPractice).

Thank you for your continued efforts to help fight flu each year.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director  
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Department of Social and Health Services



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