



STATE OF WASHINGTON

December 12, 2023

AL TSA: AFH #2023-042
AL TSA: ALF #2023-030
AL TSA: CCRSS #2023-026
AL TSA: ESF #2023-025
AL TSA: ICF/IID #2023-035
AL TSA: NH #2023-044

COVID-19, INFLUENZA, RSV, AND PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATION REMINDER

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent:

Flu, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are highly contagious illnesses and are currently circulating in Washington state. Pneumococcal disease is the most common cause of pneumonia and is known to spread throughout this time of year as well. Staff, visitors, and newly admitted residents can easily bring these illnesses into your facility/home. Your residents/clients can develop severe illness from flu, COVID-19, RSV or a number of pneumococcal strains. These illnesses can be fatal, especially for high-risk individuals.

The flu, COVID-19, RSV and pneumococcal vaccines are your best protection against these illnesses. Since it is possible to have more than one respiratory illness at the same time, being up to date on all these vaccines will lower one's risk for these illnesses, help protect essential health care workers, and help save limited health care resources for those who need it most.

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 vaccination status, get the flu vaccine as soon as possible, AND encourage residents/clients and staff to get the RSV vaccine and pneumococcal vaccine as needed. Flu, pneumococcal, and COVID-19 vaccines may be administered at the same time. Anyone five years old and older, regardless of previous vaccination, is recommended to receive at least one dose of an updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine at least two months since the last dose of any COVID-19 vaccine. Children aged six months through four years and immunocompromised people that have not completed a primary COVID-19 vaccine series may need more than one dose to be up to date. While there is no longer a statewide mandate for health care or long-term care facility staff to be up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations, some facilities may still have COVID-19 vaccine policies for residents, staff, or visitors. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone six months and older to stay up to date with all COVID-19 vaccine doses recommended to them. Visit the Department of Health's COVID-19 vaccine webpage, www.CovidVaccineWA.org, for up-to-date information on how to get the vaccine and for materials to share with your residents/clients.

The flu vaccine is updated every year to protect against the strains that are expected to circulate during the upcoming season. 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 which are intended to give additional protection from flu. For 2023-2024, this includes Fluzone High Dose Quadrivalent vaccine, Flublok Quadrivalent recombinant vaccine, or Flud Quadrivalent adjuvanted vaccine. For more information on immunizations for seniors, visit [the DOH Immunization for Seniors webpage](#).

The RSV vaccine is available for people 60 years and older. Adults may receive one dose of RSV vaccine after discussing with their health care provider if the vaccine will be beneficial. People who are 60 years or older and have weak immune systems, chronic medical conditions, or live in nursing homes or other medical facilities are at higher risk for severe RSV illness. Those at higher risk may benefit from RSV vaccination. For more information visit: [Respiratory Syncytial Virus | Washington State Department of Health](#).

The pneumococcal vaccine helps protect against bacteria that cause pneumococcal disease. These bacteria can cause many types of illnesses, including pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, meningitis, and/or blood infections. There are different vaccines that are recommended, depending on a person's age and risk factors. For more information on pneumococcal vaccinations visit: [Vaccines for Pneumococcal | CDC](#).

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. Promote proper hand-washing among your staff and residents/clients to minimize germs.

3. Implement infection prevention and control practices. In addition to the above, implement respiratory pathogen infection control measures into standard procedures, including using facemasks for source control, limiting crowding, improving indoor air quality, monitoring ill personnel, etc. See [Preventing Transmission of Viral Respiratory Pathogens in Healthcare Settings | Infection Control | CDC](#) for more information.

4. Call your local health jurisdiction 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 local health jurisdiction can advise on testing, antiviral treatment, prophylaxis, and infection control. Visit www.doh.wa.gov/localhealth to find your local health jurisdiction.

5. Adult Family Home (AFH), Assisted Living Facility (ALF), Enhanced Services Facility (ESF) and Nursing Home (NH) providers are required to report a suspected outbreak of COVID-19, 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's/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 www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/fluoutbrk-LTCF.pdf. The following additional resources can help you prepare for heightened flu activity:

- Department of Health: www.FluFreeWA.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

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

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent

December 12, 2023

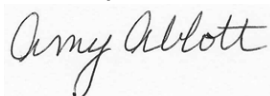
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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/flu, www.cdc.gov/pneumonia/ and www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
- Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) Vaccine Recommendations: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs

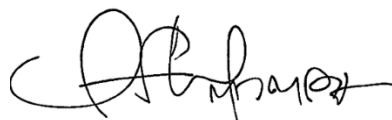
We encourage you to continue to adhere to the [Standards for Adult Immunization](#), which include routinely **assessing** the immunization status of all residents/clients and **strongly recommending** and encouraging vaccines based on the needs of each resident/client. If your facility/home provides 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 doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/immunization/adult/standards-adult-immunization-practice.

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

Sincerely,



Amy Abbot, Director
Residential Care Services



Umair A. Shah, M.D., MPH
Secretary of Health

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