



STATE OF WASHINGTON

September 20, 2019

AL TSA: NH #2019-019 INFLUENZA AND PNEUMOCOCCAL REMINDER

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

Protect residents and staff from flu and pneumonia this season. Flu is highly contagious and can be brought into facilities like yours through newly admitted residents, visitors, and staff. Residents can experience severe and fatal illness from flu, and pneumonia is one of the most common flu complications.

To minimize the impact of flu and pneumonia on the premises:

- 1. Encourage ALL residents and staff to get vaccinated against flu by the end of October and encourage pneumococcal vaccination in those for whom it is appropriate.** Flu vaccine is updated every year to include protection against the most commonly circulating strains. Fall is the best time to receive the vaccine because it ensures protection before flu begins to circulate widely in Washington. If residents or staff have not been vaccinated before the end of October, they should still be vaccinated as soon as possible. There are specific flu vaccines for those aged 65 years and older, such as [Fluzone High-Dose](#) and [FLUAD](#) that are designed to provide more protection for older adults. Pneumococcal and flu vaccines can be given at the same time. For information on immunizations for seniors, visit www.doh.wa.gov/Immunization/Seniors.
- 2. Wash your hands often and use alcohol-based hand sanitizers frequently.** Promote proper hand-washing technique amongst staff and residents to help minimize transmission of germs.
- 3. Call your local health department if you notice a sudden increase in acute respiratory illness (two or more ill residents within 72 hours) OR when any resident tests positive for flu.** They can help with advice about testing, antiviral treatment, prophylaxis, and infection control. To find your local health department, visit www.doh.wa.gov/localhealth.
- 4. Report to Department of Social and Health Services if you suspect any communicable disease outbreak, including any suspected outbreak of flu,** either [online](#) or by calling the hotline at 1-800-562-6078.
- 5. Review your facility's ability to implement all infection prevention standards and meet the health care needs of residents with suspected or confirmed influenza.** A facility can admit/readmit a recently ill resident if the facility determines all resident care and service needs can be met and infection control standards can be followed. For infection control guidance, visit www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/fluoutbrk-LTCF.pdf.

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The following additional resources can help you prepare for heightened flu activity:

- Department of Health: 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
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/flu and www.cdc.gov/Features/Pneumonia
- Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) Vaccine Recommendations: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs

You are also encouraged to continue adhering to the **Standards for Adult Immunization**, which include routinely **assessing** the immunization status of all residents and **strongly** recommending and encouraging vaccines each resident may need.

For more information about the **Standards for Adult Immunizations**, visit www.doh.wa.gov/Immunization/Adult/StandardsforAdultImmunizationPractice.

If your facility provides immunizations, please **administer** and **document** any vaccines given. If your facility does *not* provide immunizations, please **refer** residents to a vaccination provider and **document** that vaccines were given.

Workplace vaccinations are a convenient option for mass vaccinations for both staff and residents; you are encouraged to seek out availability of this service in your area for more options. The Washington State Department of Health has a free toolkit available online for hosting on-site vaccination clinics. To view or print this resource, visit www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/8200/348-663-KnockOutFluTool-en-L.pdf.

Thank you for your continued efforts in protecting your vulnerable population and helping to fight flu each year.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director
Residential Care Services
Department of Social & Health Services



Kathy Lofy, M.D.
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Washington State Department of Health