

## **Getting Ready for Influenza Season A Checklist for Residential Care Facilities**

**Seasonal influenza is a serious cause of illness, disability and death in residents of care facilities.**

Each year, across Canada there are an estimated 3500 deaths and 12200 hospitalizations attributable to influenza. Among vaccine-preventable diseases, influenza causes by far the most deaths, outpacing all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined. Seniors and others in residential care are more vulnerable to influenza than the general population because of their own compromised health status and the nature of congregate living and care giving.

To prevent influenza illness and outbreaks in your facility, there are several effective strategies to adopt. These include influenza immunization for staff and residents, outbreak preparation and plans, and staff education and policies about influenza prevention.

**This document outlines, in checklist format, tasks to complete before influenza season.**

### **Tasks to Complete in the Months before the Beginning of the Influenza Season (i.e. September)**

#### **Immunization**

- Consent for health care is implied on admission to the facility. As with administration of any medication, a conversation regarding the influenza vaccine and prophylaxis should take place between the resident and/or designated representative, and the nurse.
- Obtain doctor's orders for vaccinations, anaphylaxis treatment and antiviral prophylaxis (Oseltamivir) for all current residents and any new admissions during the influenza season (e.g. November to April).
- Order vaccine for the facility (all residents and staff) and ensure that vaccine from the previous season has been discarded.

#### **Outbreak Preparation**

- Identify residents who have not had a serum creatinine in the previous 12 months, and/or are suspected of renal impairment. For these residents, order a serum creatinine and weight in order to calculate the current creatinine clearance

**OR**



- Identify residents who have not had a serum creatinine in the previous 12 months, and/or are suspected of renal impairment. Compile a complete and up to date list of these residents to be used by lab services to draw STAT creatinine in the event of an outbreak. **This option should only be used by facilities that have ready access to mobile lab services that will be prepared to draw labs on all identified residents in a very short period of time (i.e. within 24 hours of the declaration of an outbreak).**
  
- Connect with your local pharmacy supplier to develop an outbreak antiviral implementation plan. This plan should address how your facility can receive antiviral medications for all residents in a timely way in the event of an influenza outbreak. Weekend, holiday and after hours coverage options should be discussed.

### Staff Education & Policies

- Conduct in-service training for employees regarding:
  - Signs and symptoms of influenza in patients and staff, and appropriate follow up actions.
  - The importance of reporting all respiratory illness in residents or staff immediately to the appropriate person for your facility (i.e. Director of Care, Infection Control).
  - The importance of ill staff not reporting to work in your facility or any other care facility while they have symptoms.
  
  - The BC Health Authorities Influenza Protection Policy and the importance of getting immunized. **Staff must be made aware of the consequences of not being immunized.**
    - Under the Influenza Protection Policy, unvaccinated staff must wear a surgical mask in patient care locations throughout the “vaccination required” season (usually November to March, to be announced by the Provincial Health Officer annually)
    - In the event of an *outbreak*, unvaccinated staff may be excluded from work or required to take an antiviral medication (see exclusion procedures for Influenza A and B outbreaks).
    - Note that antiviral medications such as Oseltamivir are not provided free to staff by the Ministry of Health or the Health Authority.
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### Tasks to Complete Two to Four Weeks before Influenza Season

#### Immunization

- Obtain informed consent for employee vaccinations.
  
- Vaccinate residents and employees.
  - Immunizing nurses must review current information regarding the influenza campaign. See the sections for *community vaccine providers* on [www.viha.ca/flu](http://www.viha.ca/flu).
  - People who have had severe or significant adverse events after influenza immunization in the past should be directed to discuss the risks and benefits of immunization with their physician before being immunized.
  - Defer vaccination of those with acute febrile illness until symptoms resolve.



- Document resident vaccination in the resident's medical record and on a Seasonal Influenza Recording sheet (for a template, see Influenza Vaccine Usage forms under the Community Vaccine Providers page on [www.viha.ca/flu](http://www.viha.ca/flu))
- Prepare a list of residents who have not been vaccinated so they may be easily identified if an outbreak occurs.
- All health care facilities must maintain annual records of staff influenza vaccination status.** This includes name, date of birth, position (job), where in the facility they work and date of influenza vaccination.
  - Staff immunized at an off-site clinic or by their family physician or pharmacist should report their immunization to the facility; including the date and place where influenza vaccine was received.
  - Staff should be instructed to retain a written record of their immunization provided by their immunization provider. This record may be requested by the employer at any time.
  - Staff who report a medical contraindication to influenza vaccination should provide medical documentation, and be recorded as having a "contraindication" on the facility staff immunization record.
  - Prepare a list of unimmunized staff who may need to be excluded or started on antiviral medication in the event of an outbreak.
  - Communicate to unimmunized staff the expectations for infection control including wearing a mask during the required period, and the work exclusion or antiviral requirement in the event of an outbreak.
- All facilities must provide their local health unit with influenza vaccination coverage data for residents and staff. Only summary data is required, not individual records (see online form at [www.viha.ca/flu](http://www.viha.ca/flu): Facility Report of Influenza Immunization).

#### **Outbreak Preparation**

- Familiarize yourself with the management of an outbreak. Know the definition of an outbreak in your facility. (See the During Influenza Season document for reference.)
- Review the VIHA Outbreak Toolkit and Algorithms, as well as your own facility's outbreak health and safety plan with key staff members. Consider how you will implement control measures including isolation, tray service, enhanced cleaning, cohorting staff, and reporting of cases.
- Prepare a communication plan for residents, staff, volunteers and visitors to be activated in the event of an outbreak.
- Prepare a list of unimmunized staff who may need to be excluded from work in the event of an influenza outbreak. Additionally, these persons should be assessed for eligibility for antiviral medication prior to the influenza season and this information should be kept on hand at the facility for timely implementation of an antiviral medication program if an outbreak occurs.
- Prepare supplies such as masks and PPE, necessary for staff, visitors and volunteers to comply with the outbreak protocols and the Influenza Protection Policy.



- Check on the status of influenza outbreaks in your community as this may affect your staffing or patient transfers. ([http://www.viha.ca/mho/public\\_health\\_alerts/active\\_outbreak\\_list.htm](http://www.viha.ca/mho/public_health_alerts/active_outbreak_list.htm))

#### **Staff Education & Policies**

- Review the BC Health Authorities Influenza Protection Policy. Clarify to your staff how and where the policy will be implemented in your facility.
- Prepare communications messages for your volunteers, visitors, and residents about the Influenza Protection Policy and how it may affect them.

#### **During Influenza Season**

See the new "During Influenza Season Checklist"

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