



Guidance on outbreaks of influenza in residential care facilities (RCF)



2020/2021 Influenza Season

Do 2 or more residents/staff have respiratory or influenza-like illness (ILI) occurring within 72 HOURS in the RCF?

More details on the clinical presentation of influenza in the elderly and ILI surveillance in residential care facilities is available in the document **Checklist for Residential Care Facilities on the Prevention, Detection and Control of Influenza-like illness and Influenza Outbreaks** available [here](#).

The definition of influenza-like illness is available on the HPSC website at <http://www.hpsc.ie/NotifiableDiseases/CaseDefinitions/>

YES

You might have an outbreak

Contact the attending GP/medical team to confirm if the outbreak is influenza-like illness (ILI) or influenza and take the infection prevention and control measures outlined below.

The attending GP/medical team should contact and report the outbreak to the local Department of Public Health immediately.

Public health will advise on vaccination and antiviral treatment and prophylaxis following a risk assessment

Clinical specimens : discuss with public health.

What the local Department of Public Health will do:

1. Work with RCF staff and GPs to identify the cause of the outbreak.
2. Work with the RCF and infection prevention and control staff to advise on infection prevention and control measures.
3. Work with GPs to provide advice on treatment and prevention.

Infection Prevention and Control Measures

All residents and staff should be offered seasonal flu vaccination each year

Hand hygiene & protective clothing

- **Hand hygiene with** alcohol hand gel (if hands are physically clean) or liquid soap and water for hand hygiene

Routine Care*

- **Surgical masks** when caring for affected residents.
- **Gloves/aprons/goggles** as per standard precautions

Aerosol generating procedure

- **FFP2 or FFP3 mask** (correctly fitted), goggles, long sleeved disposable gown, gloves.

*For patients < 5 years please refer to guidance [here](#).

Cleaning & waste disposal

- Provide **tissues** and no-touch bins for used tissue disposal in public areas.
- Provide tissues for affected residents and dispose of these as per local waste guidelines.
- **Wash** residents' clothes, linen and soft furnishings on a regular basis.
- **Clean and disinfect** (hypochlorite solution 1000 ppm) the environment and furniture and all patient care equipment daily.

Reducing exposure

- If the Department of Public Health confirms an outbreak, **close the care facility (and any day care facility) to new admissions.**

- All staff/residents/visitors should apply respiratory, hygiene and cough etiquette at all times.

- Unless clinically urgent, residents should **not transfer** to other healthcare facilities, attend out-patient clinics or investigation appointments. Notify the receiving healthcare facility in advance of any transfers or admissions. Residents should not attend external social activities.

- Care for residents with symptoms in **single rooms where possible or cohort where there are a number of ill residents. Continue isolation precautions for at least 7 days** after the symptoms started - see [Public Health Guidance on the Prevention and Management of influenza outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities](#). Affected residents should remain in their rooms as far as possible. Discourage ill residents from using common areas.

- Where possible staff should work in **separate teams**: one team caring for affected residents and the other caring for unaffected residents. Working arrangements for staff who work in other facilities (e.g. agency staff) should be discussed on a case by case basis with public health and occupational health, if available.

Agency and temporary staff:

- **Asymptomatic vaccinated staff** in contact with symptomatic residents have no restrictions on working at other facilities/units.

- **Unvaccinated asymptomatic staff** should wait one incubation period (3 days) from the last day that they worked at the outbreak facility/unit prior to working in a non-outbreak facility to ensure that they are not incubating influenza.

- Staff and visitors with symptoms should be excluded from the facility until fully recovered **and for at least 5 days** after symptom onset. A written staff exclusion policy should be developed by each facility.

- The elderly, very young, pregnant women, and those with chronic illness who are at greater risk from the complications of flu, should be discouraged from visiting during an outbreak. Visitors should wear a surgical mask.

- Inform visiting health professionals of the outbreak and **rearrange non-urgent visits** to the RCF.