

ISDH Long Term Care
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In Today's Issue:
- Influenza Outbreak

Influenza Hitting Early and Hard in Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS-Influenza-like illness is on the rise, according to the most recent weekly flu report from the Indiana State Department of Health. Indiana, along with many other states, is experiencing a high level of influenza-like activity early on this season.

"We are now well into what appears to be a somewhat severe flu season," said State Health Commissioner Gregory Larkin, M.D. "However, it is absolutely not too late to become vaccinated. If you have not been vaccinated this year, I encourage you to get vaccinated now to protect you and your family."

The 2012-2013 vaccine protects against the three most common strains of influenza: H3N2, H1N1, and Influenza B. The 2012-2013 vaccine appears to be a good match for circulating flu strains.

"Typically, H3N2 seasons tend to be more severe, with a higher number of hospitalizations and deaths," said Dr. Larkin. "Anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms should contact their health care provider, even if they have been vaccinated."

Symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat

Flu vaccination is recommended for anyone 6 months of age or older. It is especially important for those at higher risk of complications related to the flu to become vaccinated. High risk individuals include pregnant women, young children, people with chronic illnesses and/or compromised immune systems and the elderly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends that all health care workers become vaccinated each year to protect themselves and their patients.

Some other tips to help protect against the spread of influenza include:

- Clean. Properly wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water.
- Cover. Cover your cough and sneeze with your arm or a disposable tissue.
- Contain. Stay home from school/work when you are sick to keep your germs from spreading.

For more information about Indiana's 2012-2013 influenza season, visit the Indiana State Department of Health at www.StateHealth.in.gov.

Influenza Update

The ISDH has reported fifteen deaths in Indiana from influenza since November. By comparison, no influenza deaths had been reported at this time last year. Individuals over the age of 60 are at risk for complications as are those with chronic disease.

The ISDH Division of Long Term Care has been receiving increasing reports this week of influenza in Indiana nursing homes. Several facilities have reported a number of cases within their facility. Facilities are strongly encouraged to ensure adherence to good infection control practices within the facility.

CDC Guidance for Influenza Outbreak Management in LTC

In 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed [Guidance for Influenza Outbreak Management in Long Term Care Facilities](#). The document includes information on planning before outbreaks occur, testing, daily surveillance, and antiviral treatment.

Additional information on seasonal influenza and health care facilities may be found on the CDC web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/>.

ISDH Recommendations for Health Care Facilities

Indiana State Department of Health Influenza in Long Term Care Facilities

The 2012-2013 Flu Season has arrived in Indiana. Influenza is particularly virulent this season and can be particularly harmful to the population over age 60. All of the predominant strains going around are in this year's vaccine and will be effective in helping to prevent the illness in those who receive the vaccine. Individuals who have still not been vaccinated are encouraged to be vaccinated.

Long Term Care facilities should take steps to protect their residents and staff. The following are some suggestions on steps the facilities should consider in implementing an effective influenza control program:

1. STAFF

- A. By Indiana law [IC 16-28-14.5], facilities must annually administer, or make available to be administered, immunization against the influenza virus to all employees (to include nursing, dietary, housekeeping, maintenance, administration, etc.) of the long term care facility. The facility should educate employees about the importance of having immunization and obtain employees' consent.
- B. Employees who are experiencing signs or symptoms of illness should not be allowed to work and should be encouraged to remain home rather than come to the facility.
- C. Employees should be educated about the spread of influenza including the fact that they may be contagious even if they are not experiencing signs or symptoms if they have been exposed to the virus.
- D. More than anything, this is a time for staff to closely adhere to good infection prevention practices. Employees should be inserviced on good infection control techniques, signs and symptoms to watch for in the residents, and the precautions required for the different types of isolation. Employers should actively monitor staff and visitors to ensure that appropriate infection control practices are being followed.

2. RESIDENTS

- A. Pursuant to state and federal law, all residents should receive immunization against the influenza virus on an annual basis unless clinically contraindicated or refused. If the immunization is refused, the resident (or resident's responsible party) should receive education

including a thorough explanation of the risks involved in the resident not receiving the immunization.

- B. Residents with signs and symptoms of an influenza-like illness should be immediately brought to the attention of the physician and anti-viral medication considered. Residents should be monitored closely for any change in condition that may indicate complications such as pneumonia.
- C. CDC guidelines currently recommend that if a facility has two residents confirmed with influenza, the Medical Director should consider the prophylactic administration of Tamiflu for residents in close proximity to the ill residents.

3. VISITORS

- A. Facilities should send communication to families, churches, and other known frequent visitors to inform them of the dangers of resident exposure to the influenza virus. This communication may include a request that no one visit who is either experiencing signs or symptoms of influenza or is aware that they have been exposed to the influenza virus.
- B. Facilities should post signs at entrances that ask visitors who are experiencing influenza-like illness to refrain from entering the building and ensure the ready availability of hand sanitizing supplies throughout the facility.
- C. Facilities should provide information to visitors on infection prevention practices such as frequent hand hygiene.
- D. Facilities should ensure that anyone attending group activities is not experiencing signs or symptoms of influenza. Facilities might want to consider smaller activities to limit potential exposure of a large group.

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