

Guidance on outbreaks of Influenza in care homes

Do 2 or more residents have the following symptoms?

Fever of 37.8°C or above

OR

Sudden decline in physical or mental ability

PLUS

New onset or acute worsening of one or more of these symptoms:

- Cough (with or without sputum)
- Sore throat
- Hoarseness
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Chest pain
- Runny nose or congestion
- Aching muscles (myalgia)

If you notice **2 or more** residents in the care home with these symptoms occurring within 48 hours, and their GP(s) confirm that it could be influenza:

It could be an outbreak

Contact your local Health Protection Team (HPT) immediately

and take the infection control measures outlined below

The Health Protection Team (HPT) will work with:

- care home staff and GPs to investigate the outbreak
- infection prevention and control nurses to advise on infection control measures
- GPs to provide treatment and vaccination as required

Infection Prevention and Control Measures

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

Hand hygiene and protective clothing

- Ensure that **liquid soap and disposable paper towels** are available at all sinks
- **Wash hands** thoroughly using liquid soap and water **before and after** contact with residents
- Provide **alcohol-based hand rub** for visitor use and supplementary use by staff
- Staff should wear single-use, disposable **plastic aprons and gloves** when dealing with affected residents. The HPT will advise on the use of surgical masks

Cleaning and waste disposal

- Provide **tissues** and covered sputum pots for affected residents. Dispose of these via the orange waste stream
- Provide tissues and foot-operated bins for the disposal of used tissues in public areas
- De-clutter the environment and remove exposed foodstuffs
- **Clean and disinfect** all frequently touched surfaces (e.g. lockers, door handles, chairs) regularly in addition to normal cleaning protocols
- Always **clean and disinfect** communal patient care equipment (e.g. commodes, lifting equipment, baths) thoroughly between patients

Other measures

- Seek advice from your local HPT on closing the care home to new admissions, and restrictions on resident movement and transfers
- Place signage on entry to the care home informing of control measures
- If hospital admission is required, inform admission ward in advance that the resident is coming from a care home with an outbreak of influenza
- Ensure all staff (including cleaning staff) are aware of the outbreak, their responsibilities, and what they should do if they develop symptoms
- Inform residents/relatives of the situation, precautions/restrictions and risks (document in care records)
- Discourage visitors, particularly those at greatest risk (e.g. elderly, very young, pregnant women)
- Ask residents who have symptoms to stay in their room, with the door kept closed (subject to safety risk assessment). Discourage residents with symptoms from using common areas
- Provide **resident-dedicated care equipment** if possible (e.g. commodes, washbowls, lifting equipment). If this cannot be achieved, ensure all communal care equipment is cleaned and disinfected thoroughly between patients
- If possible, allocate separate staff teams to care for affected residents/unaffected residents. Ideally, allocate staff who have had seasonal influenza vaccination this autumn/winter to care for affected residents

