

**Brief introduction:** Influenza (flu) is a respiratory illness that primarily spreads through large respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or breathes. Influenza vaccination is the best prevention strategy and should be provided routinely to all residents and healthcare personnel in long-term care facilities.

For another quick resource about flu for healthcare personnel, point your phone's camera at the QR code for VDH's infection prevention rapid resource on influenza foundations.



## Infection Prevention Checklist



- 1. Resident placement and Transmission-Based Precautions:** For residents with suspected or confirmed influenza:
  - The resident should be isolated in their room with the door closed.
    - Place sign outside the room indicating the type of precautions, such as CDC's sign: <https://www.cdc.gov/infection-control/media/pdfs/droplet-precautions-sign-P.pdf>
    - Follow CDC recommendations for duration of isolation (7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of fever and respiratory symptoms, whichever is longer).
    - Restrict residents to their rooms, except for medically necessary care. Resident should wear a mask if transport outside the room is necessary.
  - Placement in a private room is preferred. If no private rooms exist, group residents with the same illness together, considering the presence of other communicable diseases including multidrug-resistant organisms.
    - Consult with local health department and/or VDH Regional Infection Prevention team on cohorting decisions as needed.
  - When entering the room, healthcare personnel should wear all recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) during the care of that resident.
    - Wear a mask (NIOSH-approved N95 respirator if an aerosol-generating procedure is occurring).
    - Wear eye protection if splashes or sprays are anticipated.
    - Discard PPE after each use.
  - Perform appropriate hand hygiene frequently; use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- 2. Environmental cleaning and disinfection:** When cleaning resident rooms and common areas, use disinfecting products that are registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- 3. Communication:** Notify resident and staff of positive influenza results.
  - Report to your local health department (<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/>) if (1) the facility has a single new case of influenza confirmed by culture, antigen detection by direct fluorescent antibody, or nucleic acid detection or (2) an outbreak is suspected.
  - Communicate information about resident's suspected or confirmed influenza status when transferring to other departments within the facility and when transferring to another facility.
- 4. Clinical management**
  - Administer antiviral treatment and chemoprophylaxis to residents and healthcare personnel when appropriate. Refer to CDC for the most current recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/> if influenza is confirmed or is clinically suspected and test results are pending.

5. **Look for more cases:** Conduct active surveillance to promptly detect new cases in residents or staff.
  - a. Promptly test residents or staff with acute respiratory illness or flu-like illness symptoms (e.g., cough, fever, sore throat).
6. **Employee health:** Staff should report flu-like illness symptoms to designated employee health personnel and should not work at any facility when sick.
7. **Respiratory etiquette:**
  - a. Provide adequate supplies (tissues, face masks, trash cans, alcohol-based hand sanitizer) in common areas and resident rooms
  - b. Post signage or visual alerts to:
    - Encourage visitors to avoid visiting loved ones if they are sick
    - Describe how to use facemasks or tissues to cover coughs and sneezes
    - Describe how and when to perform hand hygiene
8. **Outbreak management:** During an outbreak, refer to CDC guidance for more information, including when to give antivirals, and additional infection prevention measures to reduce transmission among residents and healthcare personnel (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm>).

## Influenza: How to Share the News



1. **To the resident and family members authorized to receive healthcare information:** You (or your loved one) have tested positive for flu. We will be taking extra precautions like wearing a mask and eye protection, and giving you care in your room, whenever possible. When you come out of your room, we will have you wear a mask. We will also be washing our hands a lot and encourage you to do the same.
2. **To healthcare workers:** This resident is now positive for flu and requires Droplet Precautions. Before entering the resident's room, remember to wear all recommended personal protective equipment (mask; use N95 respirator if an aerosol-generating procedure is occurring). Add eye protection if splashes or sprays are anticipated, and always do good hand hygiene. Please make sure that the correct signage is in place to help keep everyone safe.

## Additional Resources



CDC – Flu guidelines for healthcare settings:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/healthcaresettings.htm>

VDH – Influenza Information for Healthcare Professionals and Facilities:

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/influenza-flu-in-virginia/influenza-information-for-healthcare-professionals-and-facilities/>

- Links to more resources related to prevention, testing, treatment, and vaccination