

## Health Care Facility Visitors

### Frequently Asked Questions

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#### **Why is it Important for me to get my flu shot?**

Influenza – or the flu – spreads very easily, and can cause serious complications or death in vulnerable people, including hospital or residential care patients. You can spread influenza for 24 hours before you have any symptoms, so you can pass the flu on to your family and friends before you even know you are sick.

The most effective way to prevent the spread of influenza is by getting a flu shot, and washing your hands regularly. If you don't get a flu shot, you will be expected to protect hospital patients by wearing a mask while you are in a health care facility during flu season. This means you are expected to be immunized or wear a mask when visiting patients from the beginning of December through to the end of March.

We also ask that you wash your hands or use hand sanitizer at available hand hygiene stations throughout the facility.

By following this policy, you will help to protect your loved ones – the people you are here visiting – from getting a potentially serious illness.

#### **What are the health care facilities that will follow this policy?**

All health care facilities that serve and treat patients will be covered by this policy. This includes:

- Hospitals including emergency rooms and admitting offices
- Clinics
- Health care centres
- Long-term residential care facilities
- Urgent care facilities

#### **When do I need to be vaccinated?**

Flu season is generally from around December 2 to March 31, so if you are visiting patients during that time period, you will be expected to be vaccinated or wear a mask.

#### **When and where do I have to wear a mask?**

If you have not had a flu shot, you are expected wear a mask at all times in our facilities, except when eating or drinking.

## Where do I get a mask?

Masks are provided at the entrance, and at various other locations throughout the facility. If you need help finding a mask, please ask at the reception desk.

## Is there a cost for the vaccine?

Many people visiting someone in a health care facility will already be eligible for a free flu shot, as regular, close contacts of someone at high risk. If you do not meet any of the listed eligibility criteria, tell your health care provider that you will be visiting a health care facility and you will not need to pay for the flu shot.

The full list of those eligible for the free flu shot includes:

- Children six months to less than five years of age.
- Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy during the influenza season.
- Seniors 65 years and older.
- Residents of any age living in residential care, assisted living or other group facilities.
- Aboriginal people.
- Children and teenagers required to take Aspirin® or ASA for long periods of time due to a medical condition.
- Children and adults with certain medical conditions, including:
  - Heart or lung disorders that require regular medical care, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or cystic fibrosis.
  - Kidney disease, chronic liver disease such as hepatitis, diabetes, cancer, anemia, or weakened immune system.
  - Those with health conditions causing difficulty breathing, swallowing, or a risk of choking on food or fluids, such as people with severe brain damage, spinal cord injury, seizures or neuromuscular disorders.
  - Those who are very obese.
- Household contacts of people at high risk.
- Household contacts, caregivers and daycare staff of children under five years of age.
- Doctors, nurses and other health care providers.
- People who live or work in confined settings, such as correctional facilities
- Those who provide care or service to people at high risk in potential outbreak settings such as cruise ships.
- People who provide essential community services such as police officers, firefighters and ambulance attendants.
- Farmers and other people who work with live poultry.

## Where can I get my flu shot?

There are many places you can get immunized:

- At your doctor's office.
- At a local pharmacy.
- At a public health clinic.

To find the nearest flu shot public health clinic, visit [www.health.gov.bc.ca/flu](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/flu) or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

For more information about the flu shot, visit [www.immunizebc.ca](http://www.immunizebc.ca).

Thank you for your commitment to keeping your loved ones and our other hospital patients safe.