

## Prevention Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings

On September 16, 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released updated Prevention Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings. This guidance supersedes both previous CDC guidance for seasonal influenza and the Interim Guidance on Infection Control Measures for 2009 H1N1 Influenza in Healthcare Settings, which was written to apply uniquely to the special circumstances of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic as they existed in October 2009. See: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/healthcaresettings.htm>

The updated guidance stresses a multi-faceted approach, implemented in the context of a comprehensive infection prevention program, to prevent transmission of influenza virus within healthcare settings. In addition, more recent information indicates that face mask use and hand hygiene reduce the risk of influenza infection in healthcare and household settings.

Core recommendations include:

- 1. Promote and administer seasonal influenza vaccine.** According to current national guidelines, unless contraindicated, all people aged six months and older should be vaccinated.
- 2. Take steps to minimize potential exposures:** Measures include screening and triage of symptomatic patients and implementation of respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. Take steps to ensure all persons with symptoms of a respiratory infection adhere to respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette, hand hygiene, and triage procedures throughout the duration of the visit.
- 3. Monitor and manage ill healthcare personnel.** Healthcare personnel (HCP) with fever and respiratory symptoms should be instructed not to report to work.
- 4. Adhere to Standard Precautions:** Perform **hand hygiene** before and after all patient contact, contact with potentially infectious material, and before putting on and upon removal of personal protective equipment, including gloves. Wear **gloves** for any contact with potentially infectious material. Wear **gowns** for any patient-care activity when contact with blood, body fluids, secretions (including respiratory), or excretions is anticipated.
- 5. Adhere to Droplet Precautions:** Droplet Precautions should be implemented for patients with suspected or confirmed influenza for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of fever and respiratory symptoms, whichever is longer, while a patient is in a healthcare facility. HCP should don a facemask when entering the room of a patient with suspected or confirmed influenza. If a patient under Droplet Precautions requires movement or transport outside of the room, have the patient wear a facemask, if possible, and follow respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette and hand hygiene.
- 6. Use caution when performing aerosol-generating procedures.** HCP should wear respiratory protection equivalent to a fitted N95 filtering facepiece respirator or equivalent during aerosol-generating procedures.
- 7. Manage visitor access and movement within the facility.** Facilities should provide instruction, before visitors enter patients' rooms, on hand hygiene, limiting surfaces touched, and use of PPE.
- 8. Monitor influenza activity.** Maintain close communication and collaboration with the Vermont Department of Health.
- 9. Implement environmental infection control.** Standard cleaning and disinfection procedures are adequate for influenza virus environmental control in all settings within the healthcare facility.
- 10. Implement engineering controls.** Examples of engineering controls include installing physical barriers such as partitions in triage areas or curtains that are drawn between patients in shared areas.
- 11. Train and educate healthcare personnel.** Key aspects of influenza and its prevention that should be emphasized to all HCP include influenza signs, symptoms, complications, and risk factors for complications.
- 12. Administer antiviral treatment and chemoprophylaxis of patients and healthcare personnel when appropriate.** Refer to the CDC web site for the most current recommendations. See:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/index.htm>

