

**Communicable Disease Epidemiology  
and Immunization Section**

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**Health Advisory: Influenza Outbreaks at Long Term Care Facilities (LTCF)  
January 14, 2013**

**Action requested:**

- **Be aware of ongoing significant influenza activity in King County, including LTCF outbreaks**
- **Suspect influenza in residents of LTCF with acute illness.**
- **Test LTCF patients with influenza-like symptoms (cough, headache, fever) early in their illness (ideally within the first 48 hours); in elderly patients influenza symptoms may be atypical or mild with low-grade or no fever.**
- **All LTCF residents who have confirmed or suspected influenza should receive antiviral treatment immediately**
  - **Do not wait for laboratory confirmation of influenza**
  - **Treat regardless of results of rapid influenza tests because they lack sensitivity and may be falsely negative**
- **Report to Public Health promptly if:**
  - **Influenza is diagnosed in at least one resident, OR**
  - **More than one resident in the facility develops influenza-like illness during a 1-week period**
- **Follow CDC guidance for influenza outbreak management and antiviral chemoprophylaxis in LTCFs (see link below)**
- **Restrict staff with influenza-like illness to home until they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.**
- **Ensure residents and all LTCF staff have received influenza vaccine**

**Background**

Influenza activity is above recent seasonal levels in King County. Since January 1, 2013, 32 LTCFs have reported outbreaks of influenza, compared to an average of 12 total outbreaks reported *per season* since 2007-2008 (peak, 21). Antiviral medications must be administered quickly to ill persons to provide optimal clinical benefit (treatment) and to uninfected persons to effectively stop an outbreak (chemoprophylaxis). For outbreak control purposes, consider having orders for antiviral chemoprophylaxis prepared in advance. Do not rely on rapid influenza tests to guide treatment or prophylaxis during an outbreak, because those tests can sometimes be falsely negative. For more information on use of antiviral medications in institutional settings, see links below.

**Resources**

- Public Health influenza resources for LTCFs  
[www.kingcounty.gov/health/flu](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/flu) - scroll down to "Information for healthcare professionals and pharmacies" and click on "Outbreaks at institutions and long term care facilities"
- CDC interim guidance for influenza outbreak management in LTCFs  
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm>