

Influenza (Flu) in Skilled Nursing Facilities

1. What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza (flu) is an infectious respiratory disease caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It causes mild to severe illness among people. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, tiredness, vomiting, and diarrhea.

2. How does flu spread?

Flu viruses spread mostly by droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Influenza is spread from person to person. Sometimes people may be infected by touching something that has a virus on it and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. You may be able to pass the flu to others one day before you know you are sick and up to 5 to 7 days after getting sick with the flu.

3. Should I get the flu vaccine if I'm healthcare personnel at a skilled nursing facility?

Yes. Vaccination will lower the chance that you will get sick or spread the flu to residents and other healthcare personnel. Healthcare personnel working in skilled nursing facilities are also required to get the flu vaccine or wear a mask throughout flu season when in contact with residents or working in patient-care areas. This mandate is based on the Los Angeles County Health Officer Order requiring that all healthcare personnel in licensed acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and intermediate care facilities be vaccinated against influenza or be required to mask, while in patient care areas, for the entirety of the influenza season.

4. What should I do if I think I have the flu?

Healthcare personnel who get sick with the flu should...

- Stay home and avoid contact with other residents and coworkers until they have not had symptoms for 24 hours.
- Wash hands often using soap and warm water.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or a tissue.
- Wear a mask if in close contact with a resident who has the flu.



Key Points:

- Getting a flu vaccination each year is the best way to prevent flu.
- Unvaccinated healthcare personnel should wear masks while in close contact with residents or working in patient-care areas to prevent spreading the flu.
- If your facility does not provide free flu vaccination, find free or low-cost flu vaccinations near you. Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip or dial 2-1-1 from any phone in Los Angeles County.

For more information:

**Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health**
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Flu.htm>

**California Department of Public
Health**
[http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/diseases/Pages/Influenza\(Flu\).aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/diseases/Pages/Influenza(Flu).aspx)

**Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)**
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/index.htm>