

COVID-19 and Common Respiratory Viruses

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Intermediate Care and Congregate Living Health Facilities

COVID-19, influenza (flu), and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are common respiratory diseases with cough and cold symptoms. Most people recover on their own without complications, but some people are at higher risk of getting very sick, especially seniors and those with underlying medical conditions. This guidance is intended for intermediate care facilities (ICFs) and congregate living health facilities (CLHFs). These facility types are not skilled nursing facilities but provide some level of care to residents.

This guidance is to help ICFs/CLHFs:

- Prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 within their facilities.
- Prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 between and outside of facilities.

Facilities should ensure they read the most up to date requirements from Health Facilities Inspection Division (HFID), their licensing body. Facilities that fall under the Cal/OSHA [Aerosol Transmissible Disease Standard](#) or the [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#), should also stay abreast of the latest requirements.

Note: where differences exist between Cal/OSHA, CDPH, and LA County guidance ICFs/CLHFs are to follow the most protective guidance and requirements.

Visit these LAC DPH webpages for additional information and the latest recommendations: [COVID-19](#), [flu](#), [RSV](#), and [respiratory viruses](#). If you have questions and would like to speak to someone, call the LA County Information line at 2-1-1, which is available 24 hours a day. We appreciate your efforts to keep Los Angeles County healthy.

Important Updates:

11/xx/2024: There is a new website for the annual [winter respiratory virus season Health Officer Order](#): <http://ph.lacounty.gov/acd/respvirusseasonhoo.htm>. Please go through it and familiarize your staff with the requirements for **November 1, 2024-April 30, 2025**. Specifically:

- **Staff must receive both the influenza vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine for the 2024-2025 winter respiratory virus season, OR wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask with good filtration, or higher-level respirator, at all times when in contact with residents or when in resident care areas or areas of the facility in which residents may be present.** Staff who decline one or both of the vaccines must present this declination to their employer in writing on a form provided by their employer.
- Staff that have received BOTH the influenza and the updated COVID-19 vaccine for 2024-2025 may continue to mask for their own protection but will not be required to mask from November 1, 2024- April 30, 2025, unless there is an outbreak in the facility. Communicate this when speaking to staff about receiving the COVID-19 and influenza vaccines, although masking regardless of vaccination status may continue to be required by your facility or, if warranted based on local respiratory virus transmission, by LAC DPH.

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Screening and Signage

- Staff must observe residents for cough, cold, [flu](#), and [COVID-19](#) symptoms and take appropriate action when needed.
- Staff, visitors, volunteers, and other individuals entering the facility should self-screen for cough, cold, flu, and COVID-19 symptoms.
- Post signs reminding staff, visitors, and all other individuals to not enter the facility if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or are positive for COVID-19.
- Post signs for residents recommending masks and the importance of hand hygiene.

For examples of signage see LAC DPH [COVID-19 Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#).

Vaccination

Being up to date with all recommended vaccine doses is the best way to protect against serious illness and death caused by COVID-19, flu, and RSV. Please see the staff vaccination section below for details on the winter respiratory virus season Health Officer Order and its requirements.

Everyone 6 months and older should stay [up to date](#) with COVID-19 vaccines to protect themselves and reduce the spread of the virus. The updated vaccine can increase prior protection (from previous vaccination or infection) that may have decreased over time.

Everyone 6 months and older should get a [flu vaccine](#) every season. Vaccination is especially important for those at higher risk of getting very sick with the flu. Getting vaccinated may also reduce the risk of ending up in the hospital.

[RSV immunizations](#) protect people at highest risk of getting very sick with RSV, including infants, toddlers, and adults 60 years and older. Babies can be protected either through maternal vaccination during pregnancy at 32-36 weeks, or by giving an RSV antibody immunization to infants younger than 8 months. Adults 60 years and older should talk to their healthcare provider about RSV vaccination.

Continue to offer COVID-19 vaccinations and strongly encourage individuals to stay up to date with their vaccinations as recommended. Facilities can request LAC DPH on-site assistance with vaccinating their staff and residents by completing the LAC DPH Mobile Vaccine Team [interest form/formulario de interes](#).

Residents:

Facilities should ensure that all residents are up to date with any COVID-19 vaccine doses recommended for them.

- Offer age appropriate COVID-19 vaccine doses to all residents as soon as they are eligible for a dose.
- Have a system for checking if all new residents are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines (vaccine cards, online records, etc.), and have a system in place for vaccinating the individual if they are overdue for a recommended vaccine dose. A vaccine dose may be delayed for up to 90 days after recent COVID-19 infection.

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- Continue to improve vaccination rates for residents including re-offering the recommended vaccine dose to persons who initially decline. See [Best Practices for Improving Vaccination](#) for more strategies.

Staff:

Per the 2024-2025 winter respiratory virus season Health Officer Order: Staff must receive BOTH the influenza vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine for the 2024-2025 winter respiratory virus season, OR wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask with good filtration, or higher-level respirator, at all times when in resident care areas or areas of the facility in which residents may be present from November 1, 2024-April 30, 2025. Staff who decline one or both of the vaccines must present this declination to their employer in writing on a form provided by their employer. For any clarifications or questions, please see the [website](#) and the [order](#).

COVID-19 vaccines are free and widely available across LA County

Visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vaccines> to find locations. Call **1-833-540-0473** for help making an appointment or to set up vaccination for people who are homebound. Phone lines are open from 8am to 8:00pm, 7 days a week. Information is also available in many languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1.

Testing and Treatment

Residents and staff with cough, cold, flu, or COVID-19 symptoms should be tested for COVID-19. Facilities should refer to the CAL/OSHA [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#) for testing and management of staff with close workplace contacts, work exclusion, return to work criteria, and outbreak/response testing. Where differences exist between Cal/OSHA, CDPH, and LA County, ICFs and CLHFs are to follow the most protective guidance and requirements.

COVID-19 treatment can prevent people from getting very sick. All residents in ICFs and CLHFs with COVID-19 or who are symptomatic close contacts should be evaluated for treatment of COVID-19 promptly. The oral medicines must be started within 5 days of when symptoms begin. Most adults and some children qualify for treatment if they have symptoms of COVID-19 AND either test positive for COVID-19 OR a doctor recommends treatment.

Free and low-cost treatments are available for eligible patients. Contact a healthcare provider or call the Public Health Call Center at 1-833-540-0473. For more information, visit [Medicine to Treat COVID-19](#).

The LAC DPH Mobile Therapeutics Team (MTT): Facilities with 3 or more patients with symptomatic COVID-19 infection can request the MTT to come to the facility to assess and treat residents.

See flyer: [English](#) | [Español](#).

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During the respiratory virus season (typically fall through early spring), facilities should also test individuals with cough/cold symptoms and risk factors for influenza, particularly if they test negative for COVID-19. Antiviral medications for influenza are available by prescription for adults and children who get sick with flu, especially individuals at higher risk of serious complications. These medicines work best if started within two days of when symptoms begin. For more information, visit [CDC Flu Treatment](#).

Infection Prevention and Control Plan

All facilities should develop an infection control plan, including having a designated Infection Preventionist.

Infection Preventionist training courses and information on how to build an infection prevention program can be found on the LAC DPH [SNF Program Webpage](#).

Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Well-fitting masks [help prevent the spread of COVID-19](#). County public indoor mask wearing rules and recommendations change based on local metrics.

Residents

- All residents must be provided a clean mask on request.
- Residents with cough, cold, flu, or COVID-19 symptoms should wear a well-fitting surgical mask or respirator around others.
- Residents with COVID-19 must wear a well-fitting mask (surgical masks or respirator recommended) if they must be around others through Day 10 as per isolation instructions: ph.lacounty.gov/covidcommunity.
- Residents who are close contacts should wear a well-fitting mask (surgical mask or respirator recommended) indoors around others through Day 10 as per instructions for close contacts: ph.lacounty.gov/covidcommunity.

Staff

- Depending on facility type, your facility may fall under the Cal/OSHA [Aerosol Transmissible Disease Standard](#) or the [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#). Even in facilities where N95 respirators are not required for the care of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, staff and caregivers are strongly recommended to wear N95 respirators when caring for these residents. Please ensure you are complying with the regulations that apply to your facility. Reminder: Where differences exist between Cal/OSHA, CDPH, and LA County, facilities are to follow the most protective guidance and requirements.
- Staff with COVID-19 infection who are permitted to return to work must wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask at all times around others through at least Day 10. Surgical masks or respirators are strongly recommended.
- Staff who are close contacts should wear a well-fitting mask at all times while they are at work around others through Day 10. Surgical masks or respirators are strongly recommended.
- Facilities should consider sharing with staff the LAC DPH one-pager for workers [Know which Masks Provide the Best Protection](#) (available in multiple languages at ph.lacounty.gov/masks).



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Visitors

- When not required to do so, visitors should be encouraged to wear well-fitting masks while in the facility.
- Visitors to a resident in isolation for COVID-19 should be provided with the same type of PPE used by facility staff. Visitors do not need a fit tested N95 respirator but should be instructed on how to perform a [seal check](#).

When masks are not required, all individuals may choose to wear a mask without fear of discrimination or retaliation.

For additional mask resources, see:

- LA County [Mask Wearing Rules and Recommendations](#)

Group Activities, Communal Dining, and Visitation

Group activities and communal dining are open to all residents not in isolation. Group activities and communal dining should occur in large rooms with good ventilation or outside, if possible.

COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts

Residents:

- With cough, cold, flu, or COVID-19 symptoms should avoid others and test for COVID-19.
- Who test positive for or a healthcare provider diagnoses with COVID-19 must isolate until:
 - No fever for at least 1 day (24 hours) without the use of fever-reducing medications.
 - No symptoms, or symptoms are mild and improving.
 - Follow instructions for positive COVID-19 [cases](#). Isolation can be extended if considered necessary by clinical evaluation.
- Who are close contacts to a COVID-19 case should follow all instructions for [close contacts](#).

Staff:

- With symptoms of possible COVID-19 should be excluded from work pending COVID-19 test results.
- Who test positive for or are diagnosed with COVID-19 must be excluded from the workplace until they meet return to work requirements per [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#) and/or [Workplace Return to Work](#).
 - Facilities must ensure that all COVID-19 cases returning to the workplace wear a well-fitting mask through Day 10 (Day 0 is symptom onset day; if they have no symptoms, Day 0 is the test collection day of first positive test).
- Who are close contacts may continue to work as long as they have no symptoms of COVID-19. They should test for COVID-19 3-5 days after their last close contact. For 10 days, they are to wear a well-fitting mask around others indoors and monitor their health. See [Employees that are Close Contacts](#).

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- As the populations in these facility types are more vulnerable than others, facilities may choose to follow the more stringent [Infection Prevention Guidance for Healthcare Personnel](#), particularly [CDPH AFL 21-08.9](#).

Note: if there is an outbreak in the facility, testing and masking is required by Cal/OSHA.

Facilities should refer to the CAL/OSHA [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#) for testing of close workplace contacts, work exclusion, return to work criteria, and outbreak/response testing. Reminder: Where differences exist between Cal/OSHA, CDPH, and LA County, ICFs and CLHF are to follow the most protective guidance and requirements.

Case Reporting

ICFs and CLHFs must report within 24 hours when they know of at least two COVID-19 cases in residents within a 7-day period. Report cases to LAC DPH by using the RedCap Reporting Form: <https://redcap.link/lac-covid> or by calling 888-397-3993 during daytime hours or 213-240-7821.

For more details, including the definition of linked cases, see the Los Angeles County Health Officer Order [COVID-19 Reporting Requirements](#).

Cleaning & Disinfecting Practices

- Regularly cleaning surfaces helps prevent the spread of germs that make people sick.
- Facilities should regularly clean frequently touched surfaces and objects such as door handles, stair rails, elevator buttons, touchpads, and restroom fixtures. They should also clean other surfaces when they are visibly dirty.
- In addition to cleaning, the CDC recommends disinfecting areas where people have been obviously ill (for instance, vomiting on facility surfaces).

See the [Recommended Training for IPC in SNFs webpage](#) for resources on cleaning and disinfection training.

Additional Resources

LAC DPH

- COVID-19 website: ph.lacounty.gov/Coronavirus and [sitemap](#)
- [SNF Building an Infection Prevention Program](#)
- [IPC Training for SNFs](#)
- [Los Angeles Health Alert Network](#): Communications to health care professionals regarding time-sensitive topics such as local or national disease outbreaks and emerging health risks.

CDC

- [Ventilation in Buildings](#) | [Ventilation in Homes](#)
- [Hand Hygiene](#)