

Wednesday, 21 August 2024

## Health Protection

**Guidance on the management of COVID-19/Influenza in care homes and other residential facilities**  
Updated September 2023  
HSC Public Health Agency

Do residents or staff have any of the following symptoms (new or worsening)?

- Continuing cough
- Fever (37.8°C or above) or chills
- Loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia)
- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Unexplained tiredness, lack of energy
- Muscle aches or pains
- Loss of appetite
- Headache that is unusual or lasts longer than normal
- Sore throat, stuffy or runny nose
- Diarrhoea, nausea or vomiting

OR

Sudden decline in physical or mental ability without other known cause eg delirium, new onset confusion, reduced alertness and mobility

OR

A positive test for COVID-19 or influenza.

If there are two or more residents or members of staff with onset of symptoms occurring within 14 days, **YOU MIGHT HAVE AN OUTBREAK.**

Contact the PHA Duty Room on 0300 555 0119 for a risk assessment and take infection control measures. If you are concerned about a resident's clinical condition, contact their GP or out of hours service.

The Public Health Agency will:

- risk assess for evidence of transmission within the home;
- provide verbal and written advice on PPE, measures;
- work with care home staff to assess if further interventions are required.

**Outbreak and infection control measures**  
Refer to PHA guidance for more detailed information

**Hand hygiene and personal protective equipment**

- Ensure that liquid soap and disposable paper towels are available at all hand wash sinks.
- Wash hands thoroughly using liquid soap and water, using the seven step technique. Follow the 5 moments for hand hygiene:
  - 1 Before patient contact
  - 2 Before a clean/aseptic procedure
  - 3 After body fluid exposure risk
  - 4 After patient contact
  - 5 After contact with patient surroundings
- Staff should wear single use plastic aprons, gloves and surgical masks when caring for residents. Eye protection may be required under certain circumstances. For detailed advice see <https://www.infectioncontrol.hsc.nhs.uk/infection-prevention-and-control-measures-respiratory-illness>

**Cleaning and waste disposal**

- Increase cleaning of the environment. Pay special attention to touch points and shared equipment eg hoists.
- Encourage using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes. Rinse the tissue and kill germs by washing hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Provide tissues and covered sputum pots for affected residents.
- Dispose of these and personal protective equipment as clinical waste.
- Provide foot operated bin for used tissue disposal in public areas.
- Ensure proper cleaning and replacement of oxygen/humidifier equipment.
- Affected residents' laundry should be treated as infected.

**Reducing exposure**

- Follow physical distancing and current guidance for unaffected residents.
- Admissions/transfers to the nursing home from a HCT facility should only take place following a risk assessment on a case-by-case basis in line with current guidance.
- Staff should work in separate teams: one team caring for affected residents and the other caring for unaffected residents, where possible.
- Agency and temporary staff should shower and put on a clean uniform before moving to another facility.
- Staff with COVID-19 symptoms should self-isolate and take an LFD test. If positive they should continue to self-isolate for 10 days. Isolation may be reduced following risk assessment and testing. See the care home guidance link below.
- Waiting may need to be restricted following a risk assessment.
- Identify hand hygiene point, with soap and water, for visitors on entering and leaving home. This practice must be reinforced during an outbreak.
- Discuss the presence of an outbreak with Trust facilities or services before any transfers.

Care home guidance can be found here: <http://pha.site/guidance-healthcare>  
Public Health Agency Duty Room 0300 555 0119.  
HSC Public Health Agency 12-13, Linfield Road, Belfast BT9 6AD. Tel: 0300 555 0119. [www.publichealth.hsc.nhs.uk](http://www.publichealth.hsc.nhs.uk) PHA 0822

This poster gives advice to care homes on the actions they should take in the case of an outbreak of COVID-19 or influenza.

## Details

Format

A3 poster printed July 2022; updated version PDF only

Target group

Health professionals

## Downloads

Attachment

Size

[Care homes outbreak A3 poster FINAL 0724\\_0.pdf](#) 729.03 KB

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