

INFLUENZA INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESIDENTS, FAMILIES, STAFF, AND VISITORS

We are experiencing an outbreak of influenza and are working closely with Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and Public Health to limit the spread within the Personal Care Home.

WHAT IS INFLUENZA?

- Influenza is an infection caused by a virus. It can spread easily from one person to another through coughing, sneezing or sharing food or drinks. You can also get the flu by touching objects contaminated with the flu virus then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.
- Influenza arrives every year in late fall or early winter.

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU?

- Symptoms are usually more serious than a cold.
- Symptoms can include cough and a fever, sore throat, muscle aches, joint pains and exhaustion.
Children may feel sick to their stomach, vomit or have diarrhea. Elderly people, young people and people with lowered immunity may not have a fever.
- Not everyone who gets the flu develops symptoms but they still may be able to spread it to others, especially if they cough or sneeze. It is important for all people to practice good cough and sneeze etiquette, whether or not they feel ill.
- Flu symptoms last about 2 to 7 days, sometimes longer in the elderly and in people with chronic diseases.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS AGAINST INFLUENZA?

Yearly vaccination is the best way. It is never too late to get your influenza vaccination.

- Annual influenza immunization campaigns are held every fall. Personal Care Homes offer the influenza vaccine to their residents/families/staff and volunteers every year.
- Manitoba Health & Healthy Living offers free vaccine to all Manitobans.

Other ways to protect yourself and others include:

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve or use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth. Put the tissue in the garbage immediately.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. When soap and water are not available and your hands are not visibly soiled, hand sanitizers are an acceptable alternative.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes and nose.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Do not visit residents in personal care homes/long term care facilities if you have a cold or influenza symptoms.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE INFLUENZA?

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Most people can manage the influenza at home with plenty of rest, fluids and acetaminophen (also called Tylenol or Tempra) for fever control or muscle aches. Do not give ASA (aspirin) to children.
- Antibiotics do not help unless bacterial complication develops.
- Gargle with warm salt water if you have a sore throat

- Use a cool mist humidifier to help with a stuffy nose.
- New antiviral medications can reduce and shorten the length of influenza symptoms when taken early in the illness. These drugs need to be started early (within 48 hours of onset of symptoms) and are eligible for provincial drug program reimbursement under some circumstances.

The decision to seek medical care will be affected by factors such as age, existing health problems or the symptoms a person is experiencing at the time. People who are normally healthy and have symptoms of the flu should seek medical attention if:

- You have difficult or painful breathing
- You are coughing up bloody sputum or if you are coughing up cloudy (yellow or green) phlegm, especially with persistent high fever.
- You are wheezing
- You have a fever for 3 or 4 days that is not getting better or is getting worse
- You experience a sudden return of high fever and other symptoms after initial improvement
- You have extreme ear pain
- You are not getting better after trying rest, fluids and acetaminophen.
- You have a small child with a fever higher than 39 °C (102° F).

People who may be at risk for severe illness should contact their health care provider early if they have flu symptoms, including:

- People with a chronic medical condition such as heart or lung disease or diabetes
- People 65 years of age and older and others who may be frail, have mobility problems or live alone
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with other risks such as alcoholism
- Pregnant women
- Children under five, people of Aboriginal ancestry, disadvantaged populations (example homeless), people living in remote or isolated areas and those with other risks such as severe obesity may also be at increased risk for severe illness from some types of flu (example H1N1)

People who have difficulty breathing or are believed to be severely ill, dehydrated, extremely drowsy or confused should seek medical attention by going to the nearest hospital emergency department or calling 911.

Reference: Manitoba Health- Seasonal Flu- Flu Questions and Answers

Website link <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/qanda.html>; entered September 4, 2012 and above information retrieved.

For further information contact Health Links-Info-Santé @ 204-788-8200 .