

2-19-24 Weekly Clinical Update

As if the continued COVID-19 outbreaks aren't enough, RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) is also "making the rounds" across the entire country. On the LTC National Infection Prevention Forum, Dr. David Gifford, the Chief Medical Officer for AHCA shared this document from CDC. In previous years, RSV has been more impactful for children, but that has changed. RSV generally is much more severe for elders and results in more hospitalizations and deaths. This week's update will simply share the document from Dr. Gifford.

[The Essential Role of Infection Preventionists during Respiratory Virus Season](#)

A Message from CDC Project Firstline and Kara Jacobs Slifka, MD, MPH, Lead for the Long-term Care Team in CDC's Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion

As respiratory viruses continue to spread in the community this winter, the risk for spread in nursing homes continues as well. Older adults and nursing home residents are particularly at higher risk for severe illness and outcomes from respiratory infections. Vaccination remains our best prevention, and this is the first season where vaccines are available to protect against flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19.

We know you have been working hard to encourage your residents, staff, and visitors to get vaccinated if they are in the groups for whom these vaccines are recommended.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/recommendations.html> Thank you.

Your role as an infection preventionist is essential for protecting the residents and staff in your facility. Preventing the spread of respiratory viruses requires a comprehensive approach that includes not only vaccination, but also testing, treatment, and the implementation of proven infection prevention and control measures.

CDC's new Viral Respiratory Pathogens Toolkit for Nursing Homes

(<https://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/prevention/viral-respiratory-toolkit.html>) can help you prepare for, respond to, and control viral respiratory infections in your facility. Now is the time to think about allocating resources for situations that may require increased supplies. It is also important to explore options with facility engineers to improve ventilation delivery and indoor air quality. Below are some key reminders, for which more detail is provided in the toolkit (<https://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/prevention/viral-respiratory-toolkit.html>).

Monitor and Mask:

Be aware of respiratory virus levels (<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/data-research/dashboard/activity-levels.html>) in your community. When respiratory virus levels are high, consider broad source control in the facility to keep viruses from spreading.

In addition to local disease activity information, general metrics and data sources are available that can help facilities determine when spread is increasing in the community, including:

- Long-term care data on the CDC COVID Data Tracker: Nursing Home Residents, and CMS COVID19 Nursing Home Data, which provide case and death counts of nursing home residents and staff with positive COVID-19 test results.

- The RESP-NET interactive dashboard that shows lab-confirmed hospitalizations associated with flu, RSV and COVID-19 among children and adults in select U.S. counties or county-equivalents.
- Data from the National Emergency Department Visits for COVID-19, Influenza, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus provide a combined view of weekly emergency department visit data according to data report to the National Syndromic Surveillance Program.
- A weekly U.S. influenza surveillance report, FluView, prepared by CDC.
- Hospital admissions data on the CDC COVID Data Tracker.

CDC's Project Firstline has created posters

(https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/projectfirstline/healthcare/print.html#anchor_1646671363779)

to help encourage the use of facemasks that you can download, share, and print. You can add your facility's logo to customize them if you wish.

Educate and Protect:

Educating everyone, including residents, visitors, and staff, about recommended infection prevention and control practices in the facility will help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. This includes education about respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, proper hand hygiene, and regular environmental cleaning. It is also important that visitors and staff are encouraged to stay home when they are experiencing respiratory symptoms.

Test and Treat:

It is essential to provide residents and staff access to respiratory testing with rapid results. Testing can be important to determine whether you have COVID-19 or flu (or a different infection). Testing can help ensure timely access to appropriate treatment and/or prophylaxis for flu and COVID-19 when indicated. Empiric treatment with flu antivirals can be considered.

When an acute respiratory infection is identified in a resident or HCP in the facility, it is important to take rapid action to prevent the spread of illness to others in the facility. While decisions about treatment, prophylaxis, and isolation vary depending on the pathogen, infection prevention and control strategies, such as resident placement, use of a facemasks for source control, and physical distancing, are the same regardless of the pathogen.

More details are available in the Viral Respiratory Pathogens Toolkit for Nursing Homes (<https://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/prevention/viral-respiratory-toolkit.html>) including information about initial attempts to control the spread of respiratory viruses and additional measures for consideration if spread continues.

Taken together, these actions can protect your residents and staff from respiratory viruses. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to providing safe, high-quality care.

