

Ministry of Long-Term Care

Respiratory Illness Preparedness Webinar

Information Session for Residents, Families and Caregivers

November 1, 2023



Respiratory Illness Season Context

- The Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) is anticipating a challenging respiratory illness season, with influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19 circulating. Since mid-August, there has been an increased number of COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care homes.
- The risk of severe outcomes for residents due to COVID-19 has been reduced, due to the access and uptake of vaccines, availability of safe and effective antivirals, and high immunity in the general community.
- Infection prevention and control measures are in place to help reduce the risk and impact of outbreaks.
- The Ministry of Long-Term Care will continue to work with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health to closely monitor trends and projections in the event that further action is required to optimize the health and wellbeing of individuals living and working in long-term care homes.

Infection, Prevention and Control (IPAC)



- Hand hygiene should be performed before and after meals and group activities, using hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Masks are encouraged for everyone in common areas and for staff when working directly with residents.
 - Staff are required to wear masks and appropriate personal protective equipment if there is a risk of exposing themselves or others to an infection.
 - Residents may request at any time that staff wear a mask when providing care.
- Homes must provide personal protective equipment for staff, residents, caregivers and essential visitors.
- Caregivers, visitors and staff should self-monitor for symptoms and not attend the home if they are not feeling well.

Vaccines and Therapeutics



- Getting your COVID-19 and influenza vaccines is the best way to stay protected and prevent severe outcomes, including hospitalization.
 - Recommended interval for the COVID-19 vaccine is 6 months after last dose or last infection; can receive a dose at a minimum of 3 months from last COVID-19 dose or infection.
- Homes are required to offer COVID-19 and flu vaccines to residents and are also encouraged to offer COVID-19 and flu vaccines to caregivers.
- Receiving COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the same time is safe and encouraged.
- Residents over the age of 60 can also expect to be offered a vaccine for RSV. The RSV vaccine should be given at least 14 days before or after the COVID-19 or flu vaccines.
- Homes are encouraged to pre-assess residents for eligibility to receive antiviral medications, such as Paxlovid and Tamiflu, to treat respiratory illnesses.

Outbreak Management



- The local Public Health Unit declares when a home is in outbreak, and when the outbreak is over.
- The home's outbreak management team works with the local public health unit to manage the outbreak response, based on Ministry of Health guidance, including cohorting, isolating, masking, etc.
- Homes cannot deny essential caregivers from visiting their loved ones in an outbreak; however Public Health may require some restriction on visitors to manage the outbreak

Outbreak Measures



During an outbreak, additional IPAC measures may include, but are not limited to:

- Self-isolating residents who are sick, with isolation periods varying for different infections;
 - 10 days self-isolation period for COVID infection but may leave their room and join in communal activities after 5 days if their symptoms have improved, they have no fever, and they wear a well-fitted mask at all times.
- Close contact roommate:
 - Needs to isolate, wear a well-fitted mask, physically distance from others as much as possible when outside of their rooms and not visit other areas of the home or interact with other residents who have not been exposed.
 - If no symptoms after 5 days, they may discontinue isolation after a minimum of 5 days of isolation
 - All other close contacts do not need to self-isolate if no symptoms but should follow risk reduction measures such as wearing a mask and physically distancing if possible.

Outbreak Measures (con't)



During an outbreak, additional IPAC measures may include, but are not limited to:

- Increasing use of personal protective equipment, including universal masking;
 - Cohorting (dividing into groups) based on illness exposure;
 - Shifting from large group activities to smaller group activities or 1 to 1 activities; and
 - Increasing cleaning in the environment (e.g., those surfaces that are touched frequently).
- ✓ The Ministry is continuing to monitor trends with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) to determine if any changes are needed to current measures in place for Long-Term Care homes.

Questions?

**Thank you for joining today's
information session!**