

# Viral Respiratory Illness Checklist for Island Health Affiliate and Private Long-Term Care Facilities

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**Viral Respiratory Illness:** Seniors and others in long-term care (LTC) are frequently more vulnerable to influenza and other respiratory illnesses than the general population, because of their own compromised health status and the nature of congregate living and care giving.

Infection prevention and control best practice; monitoring for respiratory illness; and effective management helps prevent illness and outbreaks in your facility.

This document outlines the tasks to complete before and during Respiratory Illness season.

## 1.0 Tasks to complete at the beginning of Respiratory Season

BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) has online Immunization Competency Courses to assist in maintaining best practice for the administration of flu and COVID-19 vaccines. These immunization courses are found on their website: [BC Centre for Disease Control Immunization Courses](#)

### **Immunize residents:**

- Obtain doctor's orders and client consent for vaccinations and anaphylaxis treatment.
- Order vaccines through public health in early fall. Vaccines can be ordered for both residents and staff.
- Record all COVID-19 & Influenza doses in the Provincial Immunization Registry (i.e. ImmsBC).
- Prepare a list of residents who have not been vaccinated so they may be easily identified if an outbreak occurs.
- Provide influenza vaccination coverage data for residents and staff to the local health unit by end of year.

Note: **Early vaccination prior to peak influenza activity is recommended** as it takes two weeks to generate maximum protection after being vaccinated.

Note: For more information about reporting and immunizations, visit the [Island Health COVID-19 and Influenza Immunizations webpage](#).

### **Confirm Staff Immunizations:**

- All health care facilities must maintain annual records of staff vaccination status. This includes name, date of birth, position (job), where in the facility they work and date of vaccination.

□ **Plan to Administer Antiviral Medication for Influenza:**

- Residential care facilities should pre-plan for antiviral medication dosage for prophylaxis and treatment of residents (both vaccinated and unvaccinated). The sooner antivirals are given, the more effective they can be in controlling an outbreak.
- Review care plans and order sets for antiviral prophylaxis.
- Prepare to give oseltamivir appropriate dosing based on a recent serum Creatinine for those WITH renal impairment.
  - Compile a list of residents who require lab services to draw STAT creatinine in the event of an outbreak. This includes residents WITH renal impairment who are:
    - STABLE may receive a first dose of oseltamivir and the blood can be taken and resulted before the next dose
    - UNSTABLE require a Creatinine within the last month or immediately before the first dose
- Coordinate access to oseltamivir with your pharmacy supplier including after hours and weekends.

*Note: Residents WITHOUT renal impairment DO NOT require creatinine testing.*

*Note: Use of influenza antiviral prophylaxis is to lessen the duration of the outbreak by preventing transmission. There is limited evidence of individual benefit for those already infected.*

□ **Plan to Administer Antiviral Medication for COVID-19**

- Preplan by consulting with the resident's most responsible physician to discuss eligibility for treatment for COVID-19. General information about treatment can be found at the BC Centre for Disease Control website: [Treatments \(bccdc.ca\)](https://www.bccdc.ca)

□ **Conduct Staff Education:**

- Develop a staff education plan that includes outbreak preparation and considers ongoing education needs with periodic review. Education to include:
  - Signs and symptoms of respiratory illness and appropriate follow up actions
  - Indications for testing
  - Handwashing policy and procedures
  - Respiratory etiquette
  - Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
    - How to conduct a point-of-care risk assessment and when to use PPE
  - The importance of not coming to work when ill
  - Orientation to the [VRI OB Declared in Island Health LTC Affiliate & Private Facility](#) algorithm
  - When and how to notify the CD program of VRI activity, including:
    - When to submit the VRI tracking tool to the CD Program (for affiliate and private facilities)

□ **Plan for Personal Protective Equipment:**

- Ensure that masks and personal protective equipment are available for visitors and staff.
- Establish a plan for quickly accessing masks and other PPE in the case of a surge in demand at your facility.

### 3.0 Outbreak Preparation

□ **Check on the Status of Outbreaks**

- Check on [respiratory outbreaks](#) in your community as this may affect your staffing or patient transfers.

□ **Develop an Outbreak Plan**

- Plan to implement control measures including restricting resident congregate activities, tray service, enhanced cleaning, cohort staff, and reporting of cases.

□ **Develop a Communication Plan**

- Plan to communicate to residents, family, staff, volunteers and visitors about the outbreak and any relevant information or instructions.

### 4.0 Managing Respiratory Illness & Outbreaks

□ **Manage Individual VRI Cases:**

- Follow the VRI Management Guidelines for LTC for the management of residents with VRI symptoms.
- Apply Droplet and Contact precautions for residents in the following scenarios:
  - Symptomatic residents who are awaiting a test result,
  - Lab positive and Healthcare-Associated influenza cases for 5 days from onset of symptoms,
  - For all other VRI, including COVID-19 and RSV, until fever resolves, and the resident feels well enough to participate in daily activities.

*Note: Not all symptoms need to resolve before precautions are lifted, a cough often persists for some time after the infection has resolved.*

*Note: Residents who are significantly ill with persistent and worsening symptoms may remain infectious for longer. Consult MHO to determine whether to extend precautions beyond 5 days.*

**Notify CD Program of Cases:**

- Follow the VRI Management Guidelines for LTC to notify the CD Program of VRI cases.
  - Complete the [tracking tool](#) in alignment with the VRI Management Guidelines for LTC

Inform Island Health Communicable Disease Program as follows (email inboxes are monitored on weekends as well):

- North Island: [NIHealthNurse@islandhealth.ca](mailto:NIHealthNurse@islandhealth.ca) – 1-877-887-8835
- Central Island: [CIhealthnurse@islandhealth.ca](mailto:CIhealthnurse@islandhealth.ca) – 1-866-770-7798
- South Island: [SIhealthnurse@islandhealth.ca](mailto:SIhealthnurse@islandhealth.ca) – 1-866-665-6626

For any **urgent** issue that cannot wait until the next working day, please contact the Island Health switchboard and ask for the MHO On Call phone number.

**Manage Outbreaks:**

- Follow the [VRI OB Declared in Island Health LTC Affiliate & Private Facility](#) algorithm.

**Communicate About the Outbreak:**

- Inform your facility leadership including medical leader and facility administration (e.g. Medical Director and Director of Care) of any outbreak.

*Note: Publicly funded Assisted Living residences should contact the Home & Community Care Assisted Living Case Manager and other contacts on their facility notification list, such as support staff supervisors/managers, and the Office of the Assisted Living Registrar (if applicable).*

## 6.0 Laboratory Testing

- Send all nasopharyngeal swabs to Island Health lab for processing.
- If a facility needs to order more swabs, both Island Health Affiliate and Private LTC facilities may order through PHSA using the following [form](#)

*Note: The cost of the cab transport is the responsibility of the residential care facility. In the rare event a staff member must transport a specimen to an Island Health lab, this activity is permissible following the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act including ensuring transport occurs using a rigid container that can be sealed and is strong enough for repeated use (a paper bag is not sufficient).*

## 7.0 Resources

- [How to Perform a Nasopharyngeal Swab \(video\)](#)
- [Provincial Influenza Prevention Policy](#) at the BC Health Ministry website
- Visit the Island Health webpage [Immunization Information for Healthcare Professionals](#) for updated information including how to order, store, handle, administer and document influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.
- Visit the Island Health webpage [Toolkits for Infectious Diseases](#) for tools to support the management of a Viral Respiratory Illness Outbreak in Island Health Affiliate and Private LTC facilities.