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Influenza (flu) in Care Settings

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What is flu?

- Flu is an acute viral infection of the respiratory tract
- It is a highly infectious illness which spreads rapidly in closed communities
- Most cases in the UK occur during an 8-10 week period during the winter



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Features of flu

- Droplet transmission, small-particle aerosols and by hand to mouth/eye contamination from an infected surface or respiratory secretions of infected person
- Incubation period 1-5 days (average 2-3 days)
 - may be longer especially in people with immune deficiency

Common symptoms include:

- Sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, myalgia & severe fatigue
- Dry cough, sore throat and stuffy nose
- In elderly – symptoms often atypical e.g. rapid deterioration in physical or mental state



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Possible complications of flu

Common:

- Bronchitis
- Secondary bacterial pneumonia

Less common:

- Meningitis, encephalitis
- Primary influenza pneumonia
- Death 10-20,000 / year

Risk of most serious illness higher older people and those with underlying disease



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Clinical Risk Groups

Chronic respiratory disease

Chronic heart disease

Chronic Kidney disease

Chronic liver disease

Chronic neurological
disease

Diabetes

Immunosuppression

Asplenia or spleen
dysfunction

Pregnant women

BMI $\geq$ 40



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Flu vaccination programme

- Clinical Risk Groups
- Everyone over 50
- All health and social care staff
- Children aged 2- school year 11



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Antivirals for FLU

Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or Zanamivir (Relenza)

For **symptomatic cases** - all residents

- staff in at risk groups who are not vaccinated

For **exposed persons in at risk groups** – all residents exposed

- all staff exposed in at risk groups AND who are not vaccinated



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When to call the HPT

Symptoms & signs of flu – very similar to symptoms & signs of COVID-19

Do COVID-19 LFD and PCR test

For now, wait until positive results to call HPT

Call HPT for single cases (PHE national helpline or HPT and email advice)

Call HPT for 2 or more cases COVID-19 – verbal and written advice

ONCE FLU BEGINS TO CIRCULATE

HPT will send out communications to all care homes!! (so NOT YET)

Call HPT when SUSPECTED OUTBREAK



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Do 2 or more residents or staff have the following symptoms?



Fever of
37.8°C
or above



New onset or acute worsening of
one or more of these symptoms:

- cough
- hoarseness
- runny nose or congestion
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- wheezing
- sneezing
- chest pain



Sudden
decline in
physical or
mental ability

If you notice 2 or more residents or staff meeting these criteria, occurring within 14 days, in the same area of the care home **you might have an outbreak**. Consider influenza or COVID-19 as an alternative diagnosis in residents with suspected chest infection or fever or cough

Isolate symptomatic resident & send throat/nose swab for COVID-19 PCR test
Exclude symptomatic staff & advise testing through [online portal](#) or 119

Do not wait for results but call the
South West Health Protection team on 0300 303 8162 or
Email: swhpt@phe.gov.uk

SW HPT can arrange testing for other respiratory viruses e.g. Flu A, Flu B, RSV
Antivirals for Flu are most effective if given with 48 hrs of symptom onset.
HPTs can arrange antivirals to treat and to prevent flu