



AV1350 INFLUENZA PREVENTION

1.0 PURPOSE

Influenza can be a serious contagious disease spread by droplet transmission through close contact with an infected individual. The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that in a given year there are an average of 12,200 hospitalizations related to influenza¹⁻³ and approximately 3,500 deaths attributable to influenza.⁴ Infected individuals are highly contagious and can transmit influenza for 24 hours before they are symptomatic.

Among vaccine-preventable diseases, influenza causes by far the most deaths, outpacing all other vaccine preventable diseases combined. Hospitalized patients are frequently more vulnerable to influenza than members of the general population. Influenza in vulnerable groups especially the elderly, the very young and the immunosuppressed, is associated with significant morbidity and mortality. It is a major contributor to hospitalizations in winter.

Healthcare workers have been implicated as the source of influenza in healthcare settings. Vaccination of healthcare workers will reduce their risk of getting influenza and spreading it to patients. The most effective strategy for preventing influenza is annual vaccination. Influenza vaccine is safe and effective.

The wearing of masks can serve as a method of source control of infected healthcare workers who may have had no symptoms. Masks may also protect unvaccinated healthcare workers from as yet unrecognized infected patients or visitors with influenza.

Other infection control measures such as rapid identification of ill patients, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, restrictions on work and visiting, and the use of anti-viral medications all help but vaccination remains the cornerstone of efforts to control influenza transmission.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Policy Application Date	The date established annually by the Provincial Health Officer after which all persons covered under this policy are expected to be vaccinated against influenza or wear a mask in accordance with this Policy. The Policy Application Date will usually be no later than the first week of December.
Policy Application Period	A period of time determined by the Provincial Health Officer which starts on the Policy Application Date. The Policy Application Period will usually be from the end of November until the end of March but may vary with seasonal epidemiology and will also include any period of time relating to novel strains of influenza. During the Policy Application Period, Covered Individuals will be expected to be vaccinated against influenza or wear a surgical/procedure mask in accordance with this Policy.
Covered Individuals	All Interior Health employees (unionized and excluded), other credentialed professionals (including physicians), residents, volunteers, students, contractors, and vendors who attend or may attend a Patient Care Location.



TERM	DEFINITION
Visitors	Any other persons not included in the definition of Covered Individuals who attend a Patient Care Location.
Patient Care Location	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. any building, property, or site owned, leased, rented or operated by Interior Health where there are patients, residents or clients who are receiving care; and b. any patient/client/resident home or other location where Covered Individuals interact with the patient/client/resident in the course of his/her work for Interior Health; but does not include any location designated by Interior Health to be excluded from the definition of Patient Care Location.

3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 All individuals covered by this Policy are expected to be vaccinated annually against influenza or wear a surgical/procedure mask during influenza season when in a patient care area in accordance with this Policy. During an influenza outbreak, policy [AV1300 Staff Respiratory Infection Outbreak Management](#) supersedes this policy.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all Interior Health employees (unionized and excluded), other credentialed professionals (including physicians), residents, volunteers, students, contractors, and vendors (collectively, these individuals are referred to as “Covered Individuals”) who attend or may attend a Patient Care Location.
- 3.3 This policy also applies to any other persons who attend a Patient Care Location (these individuals are referred to as “Visitors”).

4.0 PROCEDURES

- 4.1 All Covered Individuals (see definition in Section 2.0) must annually advise Interior Health whether they have chosen to vaccinate or mask through the [provincial online reporting tool](#) by the Policy Application Date.
- 4.2 During the annual Policy Application Period, Covered Individuals and Visitors who are not vaccinated against influenza are expected to wear a surgical/procedural mask provided by Interior Health while at a Patient Care Location. Individuals expected to wear a surgical/procedural mask will be responsible for maintaining their mask in good condition in accordance with Interior Health protocols. During an influenza outbreak, [AV1300 Staff Respiratory Infection Outbreak Management](#) supersedes this policy.
- 4.3 Covered Individuals should continue to use personal protective equipment and abide by Interior Health’s infection control practices to prevent the transmission of communicable disease, including influenza.

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- 4.4 Covered Individuals who experience influenza like illness/respiratory infection should follow Interior Health’s established reporting protocols.
- 4.5 Covered Individuals who witness any instances of non-compliance with this policy are expected to report the incident of non-compliance immediately to their supervisor.
- 4.6 Interior Health will inform Visitors of the requirements of this Policy and will make surgical/procedure masks available to Visitors.
- 4.7 Interior Health will collect influenza vaccine coverage data for healthcare workers and report aggregate information to health authority leadership and the BCCDC.

4.8 Consequences of Non-Compliance

- (a) Any Covered Individual found in violation of the policy compliance status reporting obligation in Section 4.0 of this policy may be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, cancellation of contract and/or revocation of privileges.
- (b) Any Visitor found in violation of this Policy may be denied access to Patient Care Locations.

5.0 REFERENCES

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