

## Influenza Season



Influenza (flu) activity in the United States is expected to pick up in the coming months. In older adults, the flu can cause serious illness, hospitalization, and in severe cases even death. Now is the time to ensure that all residents *and* staff have received their annual flu vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual influenza vaccination for all persons six months and older who do not have other contraindications. Predicting the exact time at which Influenza will peak is challenging, this is why it is recommended that influenza vaccination be completed by the end of October.

### ***What are symptoms of the flu?***

Symptoms of the flu may include fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, body aches, headaches, fatigue, and some people may experience diarrhea and vomiting. It is important to note that not everyone with the flu will have a fever, this is why it is important to monitor symptoms closely. Since older adults are at an increased risk for flu-related complications, it is especially important for these individuals to be evaluated by a healthcare provider if flu is suspected.



### ***What are other ways to help prevent the flu?***

While vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza, there are a number of other precautions that should be taken to help prevent spread:

\*Try to avoid close contact with people who are ill.

\*While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible.

\*If you are sick with flu-like illness, the CDC recommends that individuals stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. This is especially important for staff who are caring for vulnerable populations such as older adults.

\*When coughing or sneezing, use a tissue when available and dispose of in a trash receptacle.

\*Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If it is not possible to use soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

\*Clean and disinfect high traffic areas and common surfaces frequently.

### ***Where can I learn more?***

More general information regarding Influenza can be found at, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>. For local information please visit, <http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/index.aspx?nid=2270>.

To report outbreaks or for general inquiries regarding Influenza, please feel free to contact The Communicable Disease Team at 360-414-5599 extension 6431.

\*Please note: an outbreak in a Long Term Care/Assisted Living Facility is defined as ONE patient/resident with a confirmed case of influenza or TWO patients/residents who have influenza-like symptoms within 72 hours of one another. Per WAC 246-101-305 all suspected and confirmed outbreaks must be reported to the Local Health Jurisdiction (Health Department).

