



## 5 Steps to Protect Your Patients Against the Flu

While anyone can get the Flu, it's more dangerous to certain populations, including seniors as well as those with certain health conditions or weakened immune systems. A few key steps will help your long-term care facility protect both patients and staff.

### 1. Encourage Everyone to get a Flu Shot:

It is recommended that adults 65 and older get an annual flu vaccine. Since immunity from vaccination only fully sets in after two weeks, it is important that seniors get the vaccine as early in the season as possible—at least by the end of October.

### 2. Wash Hands Often:

Make sure staff use soap and water and wash vigorously for at least 20 seconds. Consider posting signs or posters to remind staff, patients, and visitors alike to practice hand hygiene.

### 3. Remind Everyone to Cover Their Coughs:

Flu viruses spread mainly by droplets so covering reminding everyone to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue can help prevent others from getting sick.

### 4. Recommend a Healthy Lifestyle:

A proper diet, regular exercise, and plenty of sleep are other good health habits to adopt, especially during flu season.

### 5. Monitor for Influenza Illness Regularly During Flu Season:

If a nursing home patient has signs or symptoms of the flu (including cough, chills, fever, body aches, headache, sore throat, and fatigue), test for influenza and watch for signs of an outbreak. If one or more patients has suspected flu, consider implementing outbreak control measures.

Since, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, people ages 65 and older account for between 50% and 70% of flu-related hospitalizations and 70% - 85% of flu-related deaths, these efforts not only can prevent illness, but may also hospitalizations- and possibly even save lives.

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