

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES  
 INFLUENZA POLICY**

**DHS-PB-2018-006**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>  Guidelines For Shelter Staff: Influenza Prevention And Control	<b>APPLICABLE TO:</b>  All DHS facilities	<b>ISSUED:</b>  July 3, 2018
---	---	------------------------------------

<b>ADMINISTERED BY:</b>  Office of the Medical Director	<b>APPROVED BY:</b>  Joslyn Carter Administrator, Department of Social Services/ Department of Homeless Services
---	---

**PURPOSE OF THE PROCEDURE**

To provide guidelines to shelter and other Department of Homeless Services (DHS) site staff when a client is diagnosed with influenza.

**BACKGROUND**

Influenza (commonly known as ‘flu’) is a viral infection generally caused by the influenza virus that usually causes more severe illness than a common cold. The virus can be transmitted from one person to another via tiny droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouth or nose of people who are nearby. A person might also get the flu by touching a surface or object that was contaminated by a person with flu and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.<sup>1</sup> Influenza infects the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. People with influenza may present with the following signs and symptoms<sup>2</sup>:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose

---

<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Influenza (flu) <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>

<sup>2</sup> NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Influenza Prevention and Control, 2017-2018. City Health Information 2017: 36 (5); 33-42. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/influenza-vaccine-availability-letter.pdf>

- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in young children than in adults.

Note: Influenza and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses but they are caused by different viruses. Because these two types of illnesses have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. In general, influenza is worse than the common cold, those affected are more likely to have symptoms and symptoms that are more intense.

Everyone can get influenza, but some people are at higher risk of complications. People at highest risk for **influenza-related complications** include<sup>2</sup>:

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5 years (especially those under 2)
- Adults 65 years and older
- People with certain health conditions, including:
  - Diabetes
  - Asthma or other lung disease
  - Heart disease
  - Sickle cell disease
  - Kidney or liver disease
  - Metabolic disorders
  - Weakened immune system (such as from HIV or cancer treatment)
  - People who are overweight
  - Children and teens (aged 6 months to 18 years) who receive long-term aspirin therapy
- People living in nursing homes or other health care facilities

The best way to prevent influenza is to get the flu vaccine every year. It is recommended that everyone aged 6 months and older receive the flu vaccine every year. This vaccine is updated yearly to protect against the new viruses that emerge every year. A Fact Sheet on influenza is in Appendix 1 (**DHS-11**).

As a core component of this Procedure, all DHS staff and providers shall engage in best efforts to offer access to influenza vaccinations to all staff and clients at the beginning of every flu season.

## DEFINITIONS

- **Client:** A homeless person receiving services in DHS facility.
- **Facility (DHS facility):** DHS operated or staffed facility or program or DHS contracted shelters, which provides services to clients. These include congregate shelters, drop-in and reception centers, safe haven, Tier IIs, hotels and cluster sites.
- **Patient:** A person confirmed or suspected of having flu.

## PROCEDURE

### A. Prevention:

- Each shelter/site director shall arrange for on-site vaccination or linkages with local clinics.
- Shelter/site staff are encouraged to get vaccinated against influenza, as well. Shelter directors shall document the vaccination of all the shelter/ site staff.
- Shelter/site staff shall provide all clients with education materials (given in appendix 1-3) about the benefits of receiving the flu vaccine and information about where to receive the vaccination locally, either at the onsite clinic, if any, or DOHMH immunization clinic, local Federally Qualified Health Center, at no cost to the client, or at a local pharmacy, for those who have health insurance.
- Shelter/ site staff may use Appendix 2 (**DHS-11a**) to answer common questions about influenza vaccination.

### B. Data sharing and contact investigation by DOHMH

- Laboratories will report all the confirmed cases of influenza to DOHMH.
- DOHMH informs DHS Medical Office of DHS clients diagnosed with laboratory confirmed case of influenza by secure email (using the BISCOM/DOHMH Delivery Service) on a daily basis. These reports include identifying and shelter information.
- If an outbreak of influenza is suspected in a shelter, Medical Office will work closely with DOHMH to investigate and control the outbreak.

### C. Management of clients with influenza

- Shelter/site staff shall refer any client complaining of signs and symptoms of influenza to a clinic for evaluation, and shall coordinate an appointment.
- Once notified by DOHMH of a confirmed case, DHS Medical office shall alert appropriate DHS Program leadership as well as the appropriate DHS Program Administrator.
- The DHS Program Administrator shall contact the shelter/site leadership to notify them of the case and request that staff educate the affected client about self-hygiene, respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette and hand washing practices.

- For clients confirmed to have influenza, if possible, shelter/site staff shall:
  - Attempt to arrange beds so clients lie head-to-toe to provide the greatest distance between faces.
  - Ascertain if the client was prescribed an antiviral medication and, if yes, encourage the clients to complete the course of treatment.
  - If bedrest is required, a reasonable accommodation for a short duration of time should be offered (see Reasonable Accommodation Procedure for Clients with Disabilities 15-211).
- Shelter/site staff must provide access to water, tissues, a wastebasket, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer to the clients. If possible, provide hand sanitizer at the entrance of each room or near stairs and elevator banks.
- Shelter/site staff shall clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with body fluids from the sick person. Common household cleaning products containing chlorine, bleach, detergents, and alcohol can be used to kill the flu virus.
- If a client is hospitalized for influenza, they shall be advised to return with discharge documents indicating whether they have received or are receiving antiviral medication, such as Tamiflu.
- Shelter/site staff shall display posters in the shelter/site and shall provide the following education messages to clients with influenza, by providing the attached documents (Appendix 4 and 5):
  - Limit contact with others as much as possible until symptoms resolve.
  - Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
  - Throw the tissue in a trash bin after use.
  - Wash hands often with soap and water, including:
    - before and after contact with a sick person
    - before preparing food or eating
    - after sneezing or blowing their nose
    - after contact with body fluids from the respiratory tract
  - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - Avoid sharing eating utensils, towels, clothes, or beddings with other clients.
- In addition to being provided educational documents, clients residing in families with children or adult family shelters and who have confirmed influenza must avoid:
  - Visiting common areas or attending group activities
  - Sending children with influenza to day care or school
- DHS shelter/site clinicians (if available at the shelter) shall:
  - Evaluate the clients with influenza as needed.
  - Provide clients with access to influenza vaccination
  - Work with DOHMH and DHS Medical office for contact investigation as requested.

---

*For more information on flu clinicians can go to  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>*

### **Education materials**

#### **To be shared at the beginning of flu season**

- Appendix 1: Influenza factsheet for shelter/ site staff
- Appendix 2: Common questions about flu vaccine for shelter/ site staff and clients
- Appendix 3: About influenza booklet for shelter staff and clients

#### **To be shared with clients diagnosed with the flu**

- Appendix 4: Cover your cough factsheet for clients
- Appendix 5: Stop spread of influenza factsheet for clients

*For more information on flu, call 311 or visit NYC Department of Health website [nyc.gov/flu](http://nyc.gov/flu).  
Other resources Center for Disease Control and Prevention [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu)*

## **Appendix 1: Influenza Fact sheet for shelter/ site providers**



DHS-11 (E) 05/29/2018 (page 1 of 3) LLF

### **Influenza (Flu) Fact Sheet**

Influenza is a respiratory infection of the nose, throat, bronchial tubes and lungs. There are two main types of virus: influenza A and influenza B. Each type includes many different strains, which tend to change each year. Seasonal influenza sometimes causes severe illness or complications, but the great majority of people recover fully without any medical treatment.

#### **When does influenza occur?**

Influenza is most common during the fall and winter months. Influenza activity often increases during the late fall and early winter in the United States, but peak levels generally occur between late December and early March. Illnesses resembling influenza may occur during the summer months but they are usually due to other viruses.

#### **Who gets influenza?**

Anyone can get influenza, but it is most serious in people 65 years and older, young children, and people with chronic underlying health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or a weakened immune system.

#### **How is influenza spread?**

Influenza is highly contagious and is easily transmitted through contact with droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person during coughing and sneezing.

#### **Who should get a seasonal flu vaccine?**

- Children younger than age 5, especially those younger than 2 years old
- Adults aged 65 years and older
- Pregnant women (and women up to 2 weeks postpartum)
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives
- Health care workers
- Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 5 years, (especially those younger than 6 months), adults aged 65 and older, or people with high-risk medical conditions

(Turn Page)

**What are the symptoms of influenza?**

Typical symptoms include fever, chills, aches, cough and sore throat. Intestinal symptoms, such as vomiting or diarrhea, are possible but uncommon. Although most people are ill for only a few days, influenza sometimes leads to more serious illness, such as pneumonia. In 2014, over 2000 New Yorkers died from influenza and its complications (including pneumonia).

**How soon after infection do symptoms appear?**

Influenza generally occurs within 1 to 4 days after exposure.

**How is influenza diagnosed?**

Doctors diagnose influenza by checking for common symptoms such as fever, chills, aches, cough and sore throat. Lab tests are sometimes used to confirm the diagnosis, but these tests are not necessary or useful in most instances.

**What should I do if you I get flu-like symptoms?**

Most people recover from flu on their own, without medical treatment. They do not need to go to the hospital, but they do need to take steps to avoid spreading the infection. If you have a fever (100 degrees or higher), plus a cough or sore throat, be sure to take these steps:

- Stay home from work or school. Do not return until you have been free of fever for 24 hours.
- Avoid close contact with other people. Stay away from crowded public places and avoid close face-to-face contact with household members.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands often.

**When should I call a doctor?**

Some people are more likely than others to get very sick with influenza. People who have flu-like symptoms or have had recent close contact with someone with flu-like symptoms should call a health care provider if they belong to any of these higher risk groups:

- Pregnant women
- People younger than 2 or older than 65

(Turn Page)

DHS-11 (E) 05/29/2018 (page 3 of 3)  
LLF

Department of Social Services  
Department of Homeless Services

**When should I call a doctor? (continued)**

- People with any of these medical conditions:
  - Asthma or any other chronic respiratory diseases
  - Heart, kidney or liver disease
  - People who are morbidly obese (BMI  $\geq 40$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> or 88 lbs/m<sup>2</sup>)
  - Hematologic diseases, such as sickle cell anemia
  - Metabolic disorders, such as diabetes
  - Weakened immune system, from illness or medication
  - Neuromuscular disorders that interfere with breathing or the discharge of mucus
  - Long-term aspirin therapy in people under 19

**Sources:**

NYC DOHMH. Facts about Flu (influenza). <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/flu-seasonal-facts.page>

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Influenza Prevention and Control, 2017-2018. City Health Information 2017: 36 (5); 33-42.  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/influenza-vaccine-availability-letter.pdf>



## **Appendix 2: Common question about flu vaccination (for shelter/site staff and clients)**



DHS-11a (E) 05/29/2018 (page 1 of 2) LLF

### **Common Questions About The Flu Vaccination**

**Q. Why do I need a flu shot?**

**A:** Because influenza can cause serious illness, especially in young children, older adults, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, heart disease, and/or diabetes. It can cause complications that lead to hospitalization and/or death, even in otherwise healthy children and adults.

**Q. Will the shot do any good? I got a flu shot once and got the flu anyway.**

**A:** Yes, the flu shot will give you protection against the influenza virus. There could be several reasons why you became sick:

- It could have been caused by a virus that wasn't influenza, such as the common cold.
- You may have gotten a type of influenza caused by a virus that the vaccine didn't cover.
- It takes 2 weeks for the vaccine to become fully effective.
- You may have had a condition that weakened your immune response to the vaccine.

While it's possible to get influenza even after you get the shot, the vaccine can make your illness milder and reduce the risk of complications.

**Q: How late is too late to get a flu shot?**

**A:** You can be vaccinated against influenza at any time during the influenza season. The influenza virus circulates year round. Influenza activity usually peaks between January and March, but outbreaks have occurred as late as May. If you did not get a flu shot at the start of influenza season, you should still be vaccinated after December and into the New Year.

**Q: Do I need a flu shot every year?**

**A:** Yes. Everyone aged 6 months and older needs a flu shot every year. Influenza viruses change from year to year. Even if this year's viruses are the same as last year's, protection from last year's vaccination will have declined.

**(Turn Page)**

DHS-11a (E) 05/29/18 (page 2 of 2)  
LLF

Department of Social Services  
Department of Homeless Services

**Q: Why do I need a flu shot if other people are vaccinated? Won't that keep me from getting influenza?**

**A:** You are only protected against influenza when you're vaccinated yourself. Influenza is highly contagious. People who don't get vaccinated can get influenza themselves and also pass it on to people more likely to have serious complications, including pregnant women, infants, children younger than 6 months, older people, and people with chronic health conditions.

**Source:**

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Influenza Prevention and Control, 2017-2018. City Hall Information 2017: 36 (5); 33-42.

**Appendix 3: About Influenza (for clients to be distributed before the beginning of flu season)**

From: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/public/dohmhnews-printable17-04.pdf>.



# Influenza / Flu

## Health Bulletin

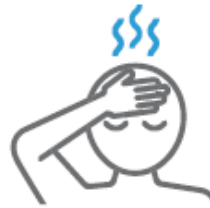
Visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) to see all Health Bulletins.  
Call 311 to order free copies.



## Learn More

- Influenza (flu) is a dangerous respiratory infection that spreads easily to others.
- Influenza can make even healthy people seriously ill. It can lead to health problems like pneumonia.
- Influenza can make existing health conditions, like heart disease, asthma and diabetes, even worse.
- Every year thousands of New Yorkers die after getting influenza. More than 100 U.S. children died from influenza during the 2016-17 influenza season.\*

### SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:



Fever



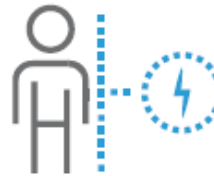
Cough



Sore throat



Headaches



Body aches



Weakness

\*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (as of July 2017)

## Prevent and Protect

- The flu vaccine is a safe and effective way to protect yourself and others.
- The vaccine is updated every year to protect you against new viruses.
- **Everyone aged 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine every year.** Children under 6 months are too young for the vaccine; their caregivers should make sure to get vaccinated.
- Get your flu vaccine as soon as possible. But even if you get your vaccine later, it is better than not getting vaccinated.

### DON'T SPREAD GERMS:



Cover your mouth and nose with the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.  
Don't use your hands.



Wash your hands with soap.

## Get a Free or Low-Cost Flu Vaccine

- Ask your health care provider about the flu vaccine. Most insurance plans, including Medicaid, pay for the vaccine.
- Visit your nearest pharmacy—many offer vaccines to adults.
- Check if your workplace offers the vaccine.
- Visit the Health Department’s immunization clinic or a City-run clinic or hospital. These locations give free or low-cost flu vaccines to all patients and visitors.



Search for vaccination locations by neighborhood or zip code by calling 311, visiting [nyc.gov/flu](https://nyc.gov/flu) or texting **flu** to **877877**.

### IF YOU DO GET SICK WITH INFLUENZA:

Don’t risk spreading the flu to others. Stay home and avoid close contact with others until your fever has been gone for **at least 24 hours** without help from over-the-counter medicine.

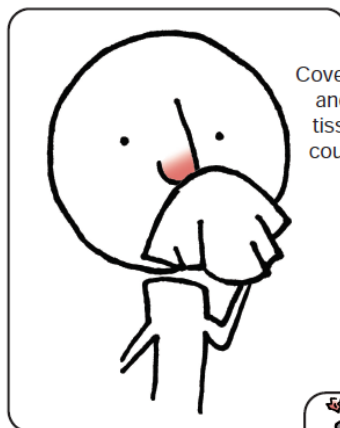
Ask your health care provider about **antivirals**, medicines that can treat influenza. They can help you recover faster and prevent more serious illness.

[Source: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#)

**Appendix 4: Cover your cough factsheet (for clients with influenza)**

**Stop the spread of germs that make you and others sick!**

# Cover your Cough



Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze

or

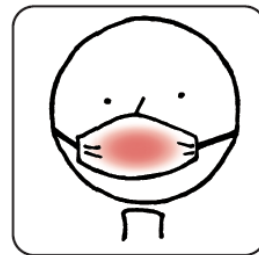
cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.



Put your used tissue in a waste basket.



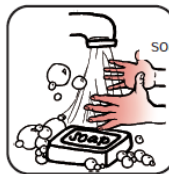
You may be asked to wear a surgical mask in public. Don't worry if you see staff and others wearing masks. They are preventing the spread of germs.



Special thanks to the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Antibiotic Resistance Collaborative.

## Wash your Hands

after coughing or sneezing.



Wash with soap and water

or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner.



THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH and MENTAL HYGIENE  
Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner  
nyc.gov/health/flu



DIS1814101 - 11.04

## Appendix 5: Stop the spread of influenza factsheet (for clients with influenza)

# Stop the Spread of Influenza! Tips for Patients

The single best way to prevent influenza is to get vaccinated each year, but healthy habits and other measures can also help.

### 1. Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance (at least 3 feet) from others to protect them from getting sick, too.

### 2. Stay home when you are sick.

Stay home from work or school when you are sick and do not return until you have been free of fever for 24 hours. This will help to prevent others from catching your illness.

### 3. Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Throw the used tissues away in a trash can.

### 4. Avoid touching your nose, eyes or mouth.

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

### 5. Clean your hands.

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.





---

**Appendix 6: List of NYC Department of Health Immunization Clinics**

## 1. Fort Greene Health Center

295 Flatbush Avenue Extension,  
5th Floor Brooklyn, NY, 11201

*(corner of Willoughby Street and Flatbush Avenue Ext., near the Fulton Mall and Long Island University)*

**Hours of Operation:** Monday–Friday: 8:30 AM–2:30 PM

## 2. NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health

34-33 Junction Boulevard  
Jackson Heights, New York 11372

**Hours of operation:** Monday Tuesday, Wednesday and Fridays: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Thursdays: 10:30 am to 7:00 pm

Call for appointments: 718.334.6100 or 718.334.6150

## 3. NYC Health + Hospitals/Tremont

1826 Arthur Avenue, 2nd Floor  
Bronx, NY 10457

**Hours for Operation:** Monday–Friday: 8:30 AM–2:00 PM.

**Required documents:**

- Adults 18 and older: Photo ID, immunization record and insurance card (if insured)
- Children ages 5–17: Parents photo ID OR guardianship papers (for legal guardians), original birth certificate, immunization card and insurance card (if insured)