



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing

Dear Directors of Nursing and Care Managers

H1N1 Influenza 09 Guidance for Residential Aged Care

Dr Susan Hunt, Senior Nurse Advisor, wrote to you early in June with information on H1N1 Influenza 09 as it relates to residential aged care homes. I am writing to advise you of the new Australian phase of response announced in response to the risk that the virus poses to the community.

On 17 June the Commonwealth announced an annex to the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza with a new response phase to manage the outbreak of H1N1 Influenza 09 called PROTECT.

The PROTECT phase sits beside CONTAIN and SUSTAIN; it is a phase specifically about a disease that is mild in most cases, but which can be severe in some cases. The PROTECT phase enables some of the measures of both contain and sustain to be continued where locally appropriate.

The new phase does not alter the advice provided to you on the management of residents with suspected or confirmed influenza.

Key elements of the PROTECT phase are:

- Identifying the vulnerable; those for whom H1N1 Influenza 09 may have severe outcomes. These are people with:
 - Chronic respiratory conditions including asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.
 - Persons with Morbid obesity.
 - Indigenous people of any age.
 - Persons with chronic illness predisposing to severe influenza such as:
 1. Cardiac disease (excluding simple hypertension).
 2. Diabetes mellitus.
 3. Chronic renal disease.
 4. Haemoglobinopathies.
 5. Immunosuppressed (including cancers, HIV/AIDS infection, drugs).
 6. Chronic neurological conditions.

- A focus on early treatment of those identified as vulnerable, especially those with respiratory difficulty.
- Voluntary home isolation of those who are sick.
- A re-focus of testing to identify H1N1 Influenza 09 in those with moderate to severe disease; people who may be more vulnerable to more severe outcomes and outbreaks in institutional settings.
- Be aware of the symptoms of H1N1 Influenza 09 infection; these are similar to human seasonal influenza.
 - Fever.
 - Cough.
 - Sore throat.
 - Headache.
 - Tiredness.
 - Runny or stuffy nose.
 - Body aches.
 - Diarrhoea, and vomiting.

Residential aged care facilities, while not specifically named, are also covered by the protocols for special situations found in the appendix to the PROTECT phase annex, which can be accessed on the Department of Health and Ageing's website:

<http://www.healthemergency.gov.au/internet/healthemergency/publishing.nsf/Content/healthpof.htm>.

Preventing an influenza outbreak by practising good hand and respiratory hygiene including:

- Hand washing with either plain or antimicrobial soap and hot water, or the use of alcohol based hand products (gels, rinses, foams) that do not require water.
- Good cough and sneeze etiquette – covering nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing, and disposing of tissues in the nearest bin, then washing hands.
- Be vigilant for signs of respiratory-like illness in residents, and monitor carefully any resident who shows signs of acute respiratory infection.
- Reducing the chance of being infected with influenza or passing the infection on by maintaining a one metre distance when speaking to other people.
- Seek the advice of your local Public Health Unit if there are 3 or more residents with influenza-like illness. The Public Health Units will advise how to manage an outbreak of influenza.

Further information can be obtained from:

Aged Care Inlu-Info Kit

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/F954A8BBC7BD2231CA25701A0004E724/\\$File/influinfo.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/F954A8BBC7BD2231CA25701A0004E724/$File/influinfo.pdf)

'A practical guide to assist in the prevention and management of influenza outbreaks in residential care facilities' April 2009

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cda-cdna-cdna.htm>

Current Department of Health and Ageing advice regarding H1N1 Influenza 09

http://www.healthemergency.gov.au/internet/healthemergency/publishing.nsf/Content/health-swine_influenza-index.htm

Yours sincerely,



Carolyn Smith

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Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance

23 June 2009