

Influenza (Flu) in Skilled Nursing Facilities

1. What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza (flu) is an infectious respiratory disease caused by viruses (germs) that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It causes mild to severe illness in people. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, tiredness, vomiting, and diarrhea. Flu is usually spread from person to person through droplets that are made when people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Sometimes people may be infected by touching something that has a virus on it and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

2. Are skilled nursing facility residents at risk for flu?

Yes. Residents at skilled nursing facilities have a higher chance of getting sick because...

- Weak immune systems may not be able to fight off disease.
- Living so closely to each other makes it easy for flu to spread.
- Newly admitted residents, healthcare personnel, and visitors can spread flu among residents.

3. Why are residents at Skilled Nursing Facilities at higher risk for serious health problems due to flu?

Pre-existing health conditions, like diabetes, and weak immune systems increase residents' risk of serious health problems. Flu complications can lead to hospital stays or even death. About 50-60% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations in the United States happen in people 65 years and older.

4. Should I get the flu vaccine if I'm a resident in a skilled nursing facility?

Yes. The best way to prevent influenza is to get a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccination is especially important for people 65 years and older and people with pre-existing health conditions because they are at high risk for complications from the flu. Also, frequent hand-washing and covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing helps prevent the spread of influenza.



Key Points:

- Getting a flu vaccination each year is the best way to prevent flu.
- Find free or low-cost flu vaccinations near you. Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip or dial 2-1-1 from any phone in Los Angeles County.
- Some people, such as older adults with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious health problems due to flu.

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Flu.htm>

California Department of
Public Health
[http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Influenza\(Flu\).asp](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Influenza(Flu).asp)

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/index.htm>

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