



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

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Dear Michigan Long Term Care Facilities:

Every flu season has the potential to cause severe illness, doctors' visits, hospitalizations and deaths. This flu season may be particularly severe with both seasonal and 2009 H1N1 influenza infections.

As a long term care facility (LTC), it is vital to take the necessary steps to minimize the impact influenza will have on your patients, your staff and your institution. Vaccination is the most effective method for preventing influenza infections and their complications. In addition to flu vaccines, people who are 65 years of age and older or those who have certain medical conditions are also recommended to receive pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV). Pneumococcal infections are a serious complication of seasonal and 2009 H1N1 influenza infections and can cause death. Please work with your healthcare provider to determine when you can get pneumococcal, seasonal influenza and 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccines for your facility.

Initially this flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that individuals 65 years of age and older not be included in the initial target groups for 2009 H1N1 vaccination. The 2009 H1N1 virus did not seem to be affecting people 65 years and older at the same rate that seasonal flu usually does. But while people 65 and older seem to be less likely to be infected with 2009 H1N1 flu, those who do become infected are at greater risk of having serious complications from their illness.

This month, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), in partnership with all the local health departments in Michigan, announced the expansion of 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine eligibility to all Michigan residents by December 14. LTC facilities should contact their local health department now to find out when the vaccine will be available for them.

In addition, unvaccinated health care personnel are a key vehicle for the transmission of influenza in health care settings. Your staff has close, frequent contact with high-risk patients. This year, CDC recommends that all health care personnel get **both** seasonal and 2009 H1N1 vaccination. Medical literature clearly demonstrates that high levels of staff immunity provide protection for those patients who cannot be or have not been effectively vaccinated themselves, while also allowing the institution to remain more fully staffed.

Information about seasonal and 2009 H1N1 influenza, including vaccination, can be found at www.michigan.gov/flu and www.cdc.gov/flu.

Sincerely,

Greg Holzman, MD, MPH
Chief Medical Executive

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