HEALTH CARE FACILITY
INFECTION CONTROL STRATEGIES TO CONTROL SPREAD OF INFLUENZA

Influenza virus is highly contagious. It is spread from person to person through droplets from an infected individual. Adults can shed influenza virus 1 day before symptoms appear and up to 5 days after onset of illness.

Elderly or immune compromised adults, very young children, and certain persons with chronic conditions have a higher risk of having primary or secondary complications following influenza, including death. Although vaccination is recommended for persons at high risk of complications, they may not be as effective in providing immunity in persons with compromised immune system. Care givers of persons at high risk, including health care workers, should receive an annual flu vaccine to decrease the risk of getting influenza and of spreading influenza.

To decrease risk of influenza, we recommend:
- Seasonal flu vaccination
- Respiratory etiquette – cover your cough
- Appropriate hand hygiene – wash your hands
- Stay home when ill

Criteria used to determine that influenza is widespread in the community
- Percent of patients seen in Emergency Departments with influenza like illness
- Percent of positive tests for influenza
- Influenza admissions to the hospital
- Deaths due to influenza
- School absenteeism rates greater than 10% due to influenza like illness
- Reports of high rates influenza like illness among patients seen in private clinics

Workers in health care, long term care or other congregate care facilities should receive annual influenza vaccination to decrease risk of acquiring influenza. When influenza is widespread in communities, workers who are unable or unwilling to receive flu vaccine should wear a mask when providing direct patient care or when within 3 feet of a patient. Facemask is to be used by individuals both to protect their nose and mouth from other people’s coughs and to reduce the wearers’ likelihood of coughing on others. This recommendation ensures patient safety and reduces the chance of healthcare workers spreading the influenza virus.

Based on available data, we have determined that influenza cases are widespread in our community (week 51), and therefore difficult to avoid. Health care workers that are not vaccinated should wear a face mask when providing direct patient care, according to their agency or facility policies. When surveillance data indicate that influenza activity has decreased significantly, we will inform hospitals and other facilities to remove the requirement for masking of unvaccinated care givers.
When using a face mask, remember not to touch the inside of the mask, change mask when it becomes soiled, wet, or after 4 hours of continuous use. Proper hand washing after mask changing is also highly recommended.

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**Thank you for helping to protect the health of Thurston County**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO REPORT A NOTIFIABLE CONDITION IN THURSTON COUNTY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice mail for reporting Non-immediately reportable conditions (24 hours a day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day time immediately reportable conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>After hours immediately and 24 hour reportable conditions or a public health emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td>No one is available with Thurston County Public Health and condition is <strong>immediately notifiable</strong></td>
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