

Knowledge Notes - Flu

Franciscan Health Systems has implemented mandatory masking for all staff not receiving an influenza vaccination. There are multiple reasons for staff not participating in our immunization campaign, a common reason being previous adverse reactions to the immunization. Patients coming from one of our hospitals may ask about your post-acute care staff and whether or not your facility has a similar policy. This policy was implemented by the Franciscans for the safety of patients as well as staff. The policy is common in this area amongst health care organizations; however, this recommendation did not come from the CDC.

H1N1 strains appear to be widespread in our area and Washington state in general. The CDC has a weekly updated map that shows “Influenza Surveillance Reporting” and it shows the majority of states with widespread influenza activity.

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/usmap.htm>

The CDC Health Advisory, as of December 24, 2013 stated that, **“From November through December 2013, CDC has received a number of reports of severe respiratory illness among young and middle-aged adults, many of whom were infected with influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 (pH1N1) virus.** Multiple pH1N1-associated hospitalizations, including many requiring intensive care unit (ICU) admission, and some fatalities have been reported. The pH1N1 virus that emerged in 2009 caused more illness in children and young adults, compared to older adults, although severe illness was seen in all age groups. While it is not possible to predict which influenza viruses will predominate during the entire 2013-14 influenza season, pH1N1 has been the predominant circulating virus so far. **For the 2013-14 season, if pH1N1 virus continues to circulate widely, illness that disproportionately affects young and middle-aged adults may occur.”**

Influenza vaccines are recommended for all that are older than 6 months. The immunization is not fully active for 2 weeks, but is still available and advised for any that have not yet received it. The CDC recommends, as a second line of defense for individuals that become ill with the influenza, an antiviral drug such as oral oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and inhaled zanamivir (Relenza).