



Policy: Evergreen Nursing Influenza Immunization Policy
Effective: October 22, 2013
Review: Annual

A. Purpose

To help ensure that those at greatest risk of complications and death from influenza are optimally protected through the appropriate use of the influenza vaccine and alternative prevention methods.

B. Policy Statement

Evergreen Nursing Services strongly recommends that all staff receive an influenza vaccine prior to December 10th of each year. Evergreen Nursing Services does not require staff to be vaccinated. However, unvaccinated staff should be aware that clients have the right to request that only those with up to date influenza vaccination records be selected for their care – potentially limiting their employment options. Lastly, unvaccinated staff will be required to follow alternative health protocol during influenza season as described in the policies of the Place of Care.

C. Rationale

Influenza is a significant cause of death in Canada, especially amongst the elderly and frail. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, nationally there are between 200 and 800 deaths per year from influenza and its related complications. Many of the deaths due to influenza can be prevented through immunization. Influenza immunization is safe and effective and is the single most important way to prevent influenza complications and deaths.

Studies show that up to 25% of non-immunized health care workers are infected with influenza during the winter months. Persons with influenza are infectious even before they become sick. When outbreaks occur in confined setting such as long term care facilities, they spread very quickly and as many as 50% of residents can be affected. Healthcare workers have been implicated as a prevelant source of influenza in healthcare settings. Vaccination of healthcare workers will reduce their risk of getting influenza and spreading it to patients.

The influenza vaccine is effective in reducing absenteeism and febrile respiratory illness among health care workers and other working adults. Influenza immunization reduces the duration and severity of illness and the amount of viral shedding. Influenza vaccine is less effective in protecting older frail adults from infection. For this reason, influenza immunization of health care workers is important to protect these vulnerable persons from influenza and its complications, including death. Immunizing both care providers and

residents of care facilities reduces the risk of outbreaks and the disruption, illness and death these outbreaks cause.

The wearing of masks can serve as a method of source control of infected healthcare workers who may not be showing symptoms. Other infection control methods such as rapid identification of ill patients, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, restrictions on work and visiting, and the use of anti-viral medication help to combat the spread of the virus but vaccination is the most effective means of controlling the transmission of influenza.

D. Transmission of Influenza

Influenza is spread from person to person by inhalation of tiny droplets produced when a person infected with influenza coughs, sneezes, laughs or talks. It can also be spread by contact with infected respiratory secretions through articles such as bedrails, facial tissue or utensils.

E. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all Evergreen Nursing Services employees (“Covered Individuals”) including full time permanent and casual employees. Some contractors may be required to comply with the Policy depending on their likelihood of interaction with patients.

“Place of Care” (the location of service delivery) policies may identify additional requirements and responsibilities regarding influenza vaccination and disease prevention. Evergreen Nursing Services staff are required to comply with all Place of Care policy regulations. Employees that choose not to comply with Place of Care policy regulations may be refused work by the Place of Care due to non-compliance.

F. Responsibilities

1. All Covered Individuals must annually advise Evergreen Nursing Services of their influenza immunization status via email (evergreennursing@shaw.ca), or posted letter (3057 West 33rd Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6N 2G8) no later than December 10th. The following information is required for reporting immunization status:
 - Name
 - Phone Number
 - Date of immunization and specify who immunized you (e.g. Family Physician, Flu Clinic Nurse, Public Health, Pharmacist or other).
 - Certify that you have had your vaccine by including the following statement “I certify that I have received my Influenza Vaccine” – this certification is the equivalent of a signed statement.
2. Covered Individuals who are not vaccinated against influenza may be required to wear a surgical/procedural mask while interacting with patients. Evergreen Nursing Staff will provide masks to employees as requested.
3. Evergreen Nursing Services Administrative staff will provide reminders to staff each year prior to the influenza season as to the implications of this policy.

