

Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D., Director

Summary and Action Items

1. To provide information to local health departments and hospitals regarding temporary visitor restriction policies for hospitals during times of increased incidence of influenza-like illness in the community.

Background

Influenza activity continues to increase in the United States and has reached widespread activity levels in Illinois. Many counties have experienced high levels of influenza-like illness (characterized as fever of 100°F [37.8°C] or higher plus cough and/or sore throat), increases in influenza-related ICU admissions, long-term care facility outbreaks, and increases in positive laboratory specimens.

IDPH and LHD Response

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) recommends that hospitals implement the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) comprehensive influenza prevention and control recommendations, [Prevention Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings](#). During times of increased incidence of influenza-like illness in the community, IDPH supports implementation of temporary visitor restriction policies in hospitals which may include the following:

- Do not allow visitation by persons less than 18 years of age,
- Limit the number of visitors to two per patient at any one time,
- Promote compliance with Hand Hygiene and [Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette](#),
- Assess visitors for symptoms of acute respiratory illness (fever, cough, sore throat),
- Request that visitors with acute respiratory illness symptoms not visit, but if they insist, require a mask be worn, and
- Limit visits to patients in isolation for influenza to persons who are necessary for the patients' emotional well-being and care.

Exemptions to these temporary visitor restrictions are permissible at the discretion of the hospital's Infection Prevention and Control departments for circumstances including, but not limited to, end-of-life situations. Hospitals should continue to implement these temporary visitor restriction policies until the state influenza activity level falls to "Sporadic" activity level or below. To monitor the influenza activity level in Illinois or to access additional influenza resources, please visit the [IDPH Seasonal Influenza Surveillance webpage](#).

If your facility is interested in participating in the sentinel surveillance program to help monitor flu activity in your community, please contact the influenza program at dph.influenza@illinois.gov or visit the [IDPH website](#) and review the 'publications' section.

Contact

IDPH Influenza Surveillance Program 217-782-2016

Target Audience

Local Health Departments, Hospital Infection Preventionists, Infectious Disease Physicians, Hospital Administrators, and Regional Health Offices.

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