

Summary and Action Items

To provide information to local health departments and health care facilities regarding temporary visitor restriction policies 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 regional 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 [health care facilities](#) 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 health care facilities 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 facility's Infection Prevention and Control departments for circumstances including, but not limited to, end-of-life situations. Lifting visitor restrictions is at the discretion of the health care facility. Facilities should follow the CDC guidelines and those above when making these decisions. Local health departments and facilities should monitor influenza activity in their community and facilities should monitor the level of activity and severity of illness they are experiencing within their facility (ER and urgent care visits, influenza hospitalizations, etc.) to help guide them with these decisions. The weekly Illinois influenza surveillance report is also a useful tool when evaluating activity levels for this purpose. To monitor the influenza activity

level in Illinois or to access additional influenza resources, please visit the [IDPH Seasonal Influenza Surveillance webpage](#).

Contact

IDPH Influenza Surveillance Program 217-782-2016 or dph.influenza@illinois.gov

Target Audience

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

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Resources

[Prevention Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings](#)

[IDPH Influenza Surveillance Reports](#)

[Chicago Influenza Surveillance Reports](#)

[Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette](#)