



Section 2

Vaccination Recommendations for LTCFs

Section 2 Vaccination Recommendations for LTCFs

According to the CDC, vaccination against influenza is the number one recommended prevention strategy. In the elderly, vaccine efficacy is considerably lower than that in healthy adults younger than 65 years of age. Nonetheless, influenza immunization can still reduce the impact of the viral infection in terms of hospitalization admissions and death.¹ The CDC's specific guidelines for vaccinations in LTCFs apply to staff and residents and are as follows:

Facilities providing services to persons aged ≥50 years (e.g., assisted living housing, retirement communities, and recreation centers) should offer unvaccinated residents, attendees, and staff annual on-site vaccination before the start of the influenza season. Continuing to offer vaccination throughout the fall and winter months is appropriate. Efforts to vaccinate newly admitted patients or new employees also should be continued, both to prevent illness and to avoid having these persons serve as a source of new influenza infections. Staff education should emphasize the need for influenza vaccine.

The National Healthy People 2010 goal for annual influenza vaccination coverage of residents of all long-term care facilities is 90%. (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5707a1.htm>)

More evidence supporting the value of vaccinating residents and staff of LTCFs comes from a study commissioned by the Rand Corporation that looked at vaccination rates of residents and staff in nursing homes. The study found that the likelihood of a cluster of influenza-like illness cases was 60% less if more than 55% of the staff and 89% of the residents were vaccinated against the influenza virus.²

While getting residents to comply with an annual vaccination program is not too difficult, often it is the healthcare staff and other workers in an LTCF who object to an annual flu shot. Data from the National Health Interview Survey show that only 36% to 40% of healthcare workers are actually immunized against influenza each year. To help overcome the usual objections that are raised, the following tool may be offered to LTCF staff.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevention and control of influenza. Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2007;56(RR-6):1-54. Available at: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5606.pdf. Accessed August 2, 2007.
2. Shugarman L, Hales C, Setodji C et al. The influence of staff and resident immunization rates on influenza-like illness outbreaks in nursing homes. *J Am Med Dir Assoc.* 2006;7:562-567.