

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

December 9, 2014

Dear Long-Term Care Facility Administrators and Directors:

The 2014-15 flu season is off to an earlier than usual start in Florida. In the last several weeks, influenza and influenza-like illness (ILI) activity levels have steadily increased across the state. Several influenza outbreaks in long-term care facilities (LTCF) have already been reported across Florida this season. **People who have not yet been vaccinated this season should get vaccinated now. We urge you to actively identify, recommend and offer flu vaccine to residents, staff and health care personnel (HCP) who have not yet been vaccinated.** At this point in the 2014-15 season, flu activity is highest in children but overall is widely spread throughout Florida. Increased influenza activity in children regularly comes ahead of increased activity in all other age groups.

Influenza A (H3) is the predominantly circulating strain of influenza so far this season nationwide and in Florida. While it is too early to tell if this flu season will be worse than other years, seasons when influenza A (H3) circulates predominantly are often associated with higher morbidity and mortality, particularly in the elderly.

Since October 1, 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified an antigenically drifted influenza A (H3N2) strain circulating that is different from the strain of influenza A (H3N2) contained in the current 2014-15 influenza vaccine formulations. Vaccination is still recommended as it provides some protection against drifted viruses, and it can also protect against other circulating strains. **The CDC recommends early treatment with neuraminidase inhibitor antiviral medications for treatment and prevention to influenza, as an adjunct to vaccination.** The Department continues to monitor this situation closely in partnership with the CDC.

Please ensure that outbreaks are managed in accordance with current recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and CDC. Conduct daily surveillance for ILI among all residents, staff, and visitors to LTCFs until the end of influenza season. **If you suspect an outbreak of influenza or ILI (two or more residents with ILI), please immediately implement outbreak control measures and contact your county health department (CHD).** Contact information for CHDs can be found here <<http://www.Floridahealth.gov/CHDEpiContact>>. Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 64D-3 requires the reporting of outbreaks to your county health department. Please remember that a flu test that is *negative by rapid antigen test* should not be used to exclude a diagnosis of influenza if it is suspected. More information about influenza for LTCFs about can be found at: <<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm>>.

Please refer to the attached "2014-15 Influenza Season Recommendations for Long-Term Care Facilities." Thank you for your partnership protecting the health of Floridians.

Sincerely,

Anna Marie Likos, MD, MPH  
Director, Division of Disease Control & Health Protection  
State Epidemiologist

**Florida Department of Health**

Division of Disease Control & Health Protection • Bureau of Epidemiology  
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-12 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1720  
PHONE: 850/245-4401 • FAX 850/922-9299

**www.FloridaHealth.gov**

TWITTER: HealthyFLA  
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth  
YOUTUBE: fldoh  
FLICKR: HealthyFla  
PINTEREST: HealthyFla