

September 2023

To: All Long-term care (LTC), Designated (DSL) and Non-Designated Supportive Living (NDSL) Site Operators, AHS Home Care Seniors Health Program Managers/Operation Managers and Case Managers

Subject: Outbreak Preparation for 2023/24 Season

Dear Operators and Seniors Health Staff:

Outbreaks of respiratory illness (including influenza and COVID-19) and gastrointestinal illness are possible in Supportive Living facilities. Preparing for and responding to outbreaks is a shared responsibility.

Alberta Health Services Public Health kindly requests your assistance in preparing for the 2023-2024 outbreak season. These tasks will help to protect both staff and residents and will facilitate an effective response if an outbreak occurs at your site.

1. Ensure that all residents have a prescription for influenza antiviral prophylaxis (Oseltamivir [Tamiflu]) available in-advance of, or within a very short time of, an outbreak being confirmed.
 - a. **Arrange for advance prescriptions:**
 - i. **DSL Site Operators in collaboration with AHS Home Care:** Options to ensure advance prescriptions are in place include:
 1. Arranging for resident influenza prophylaxis prescriptions through each resident's most responsible health provider (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse-practitioner). OR
 2. Working with or contracting a single prescriber for the whole site (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse-practitioner).
 - ii. **NDSL Site Operators in collaboration with Residents:** Options to ensure advance prescriptions are in place include:
 1. Working with or contracting a single prescriber for the whole site (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse-practitioner). OR
 2. Advising residents to see their primary care provider or another community prescriber (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse practitioner) to request an advance prescription. Please distribute to residents or guardians/substitute decision-makers the *Resident Outbreak Preparation Letter* and the [Advance Prescription for Oseltamivir \(Tamiflu\)](#) prescription template, within the next month. Please continue to distribute the letter for future admissions until April 30, 2024.
 - b. **Make a plan for how to respond at the time of an outbreak:** Contact a local prescriber (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse-practitioner) to make arrangements in preparation for immediate access to antivirals for all residents who did not obtain an advance prescription at the time of an outbreak notification. For your convenience a prescribing pharmacist can be found at this link: [Alberta College of Pharmacy \(abpharmacy.ca\)](https://www.abpharmacy.ca)
2. Consider creating and maintaining an up-to-date list of residents throughout the outbreak season until April 30, 2024 using the [Outbreak antiviral prophylaxis in non-designated and designated supportive living sites worksheet](#). We suggest the worksheet be

completed in advance of an outbreak to ensure timely and effective management at the facility. Please note the following:

- a. Information about whether or not residents have received annual influenza vaccine and the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses received may be requested by CDC nursing.
 - b. When an influenza outbreak occurs, residents who do not have an advance prescription for antiviral prophylaxis will need to see a prescriber to get a prescription as soon as possible.
 - c. Information about whether or not residents have received influenza antiviral prophylaxis may be requested by CDC nursing at the time of an influenza outbreak.
3. Recommend that staff receive all doses of COVID-19 vaccine that they are eligible for and an annual dose of seasonal influenza vaccine. Provide a copy of the letter *Important Notice to Staff About Influenza and COVID-19* to all staff, including new hires, until April 30, 2024.
 4. Recommend that residents receive all doses of COVID-19 vaccine that they are eligible for and an annual dose of seasonal influenza vaccine.
 5. Develop a site plan for how to access testing supplies at the time of an outbreak.

Although roles and responsibilities can vary between sites, site operators, AHS Home Care Managers and Case Managers should collaborate to ensure that each site is prepared for the upcoming outbreak season.

Outbreak Management Resources:

Outbreak management recommendations and resources changed frequently in the past outbreak season and will likely continue to change frequently during the upcoming season. For the most up to date information, please review the following resources frequently:

- North Zone MOH website: [MOH - North Zone | Alberta Health Services](#)
- AHS Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) Outbreak Management: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/ipc/Page6421.aspx>
- Guide for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Non-Designated Supportive Living Sites: [Guide for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Non-Designated Supportive Living Site](#)
- Guide for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Long Term Care, Designated Supportive Living and Hospice Sites: [Guide for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Long Term Care, Designated Supportive Living and Hospice Sites](#)
- AHS Health Professionals COVID-19 information: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16947.aspx>

Questions regarding outbreak preparation and response can be directed to NZOutbreakCDTeam@albertahealthservices.ca

Thank you very much for your partnership in outbreak management!

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Enclosure: **Resident Outbreak Preparation Letter**