

Flu and COVID Testing and Management Recommendations for Senior Care Residents

Flu season is well underway and gaining traction with a strain that is especially dangerous for older adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In the past, seasons with predominant strains have been associated with more hospitalizations and deaths in adults aged 65 and older.

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect oneself from the flu. The CDC recommends anyone six months and older get immunization to reduce the chances of severe illness, hospitalization, or death due to influenza. The CDC provides testing and management considerations for senior care residents with respiratory illness symptoms, including testing residents for both COVID and the flu, as well as providing information on antiviral treatments. Recommendations include:

1. Isolate symptomatic residents with suspected COVID infection

It is difficult to differentiate between the flu and COVID because many symptoms are similar. Residents with COVID or flu-like symptoms should stay isolated until testing confirms a virus. Residents should not be moved into COVID units unless testing positive for COVID.

2. Test symptomatic residents for both COVID and influenza

Co-infections are possible, and a positive flu test does not automatically mean a resident does not have COVID and vice versa. Test residents for COVID and influenza to properly care for the resident.

3. Move residents into appropriate areas

Residents with COVID should be moved into a single room or placed with other COVID residents in that unit, the same for residents with only influenza. If single rooms or isolation areas are not available for influenza or COVID residents, measures to prevent transmission to roommates such as physical barriers, masking, and antivirals should be implemented.

4. Treat ill residents

Properly manage COVID and/or influenza residents with the correct antiviral treatment. Treatment options should be implemented soon after symptoms appear to prevent severe illness.

Last year flu activity was low due to the spread of COVID and preventative measures such as masking and social distancing. The CDC said these measures could mean lower levels of community protection this year, and the agency anticipates high flu rates this year because influenza A and B are very active.

028-031 TS 01/2022

For more information, visit www.forumpharmacy.com, call (800) 447-7108, or e-mail info@forumpharmacy.com.