

SUN COUNTRY HEALTH REGION

Immunize or Mask Policy

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Immunize or Mask

- Why the Policy?
- Policy Statement
- Scope – who does it include
- Definitions
- Policy time period
- Compliance



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Why the policy?

- Influenza is a respiratory disease that is highly contagious and can spread from person to person spread by droplet transmission.
- In Canada, yearly, an average of 12,200 hospitalizations occur with 2,000 and 8,000 deaths from influenza and its complications.
- Infected individuals can transmit influenza starting 24 hours before they are symptomatic and continuing for several days.
- Hospitalized patients and residents of long-term care facilities are frequently more vulnerable to influenza than members of the general population.
- Influenza in vulnerable groups, especially seniors and children, and the immunosuppressed, is associated with significant morbidity and mortality.
- It is a major contributor to hospitalizations in winter.
- Healthcare workers have been implicated as a source of influenza in healthcare settings.

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Why the Policy

- For years, public health and health regions have encouraged their staff to receive the flu vaccine. However, the uptake has been less than optimal.
- Last year, only about 60 per cent of Saskatchewan health workers got a flu shot. That percentage varies between health regions.
- In 2013, 32 confirmed influenza outbreaks in Saskatchewan.
- Discussions with health care provider organizations and unions

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Policy Statement

- All individuals covered by this Policy must either choose to be vaccinated annually against influenza or wear a surgical/procedure mask during influenza season when in a *Patient Care Location* in accordance with this Policy. During an influenza outbreak, this Policy is suspended at the outbreak location and the SCHR outbreak policies will apply.

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Why the Influenza Vaccine?

- Vaccination of healthcare workers will reduce their risk of getting influenza and spreading influenza to the patients, residents and clients to whom they provide care.
- The most effective strategy to prevent influenza is annual vaccination.
- Influenza vaccine is very safe and effective.
- Once you have received the vaccine, you are in compliance with the policy.
- Influenza vaccine does not replace standard infection control measures.

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Proof of getting Influenza Vaccine

- Sticker is placed on ID badge.
 - SCHR site Designated Influenza Immunization nurses to place sticker on ID badge once vaccine is given.
 - Employees who attended PH clinic to bring verification card to site nurse for sticker
 - Need written verification is received vaccine from other sources: doctor's office, private clinics, other health regions, etc.

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Why wear Masks?

- Is an alternative for those who are unable or unwilling to be vaccinated
- Procedure or surgical masks can be worn. Hypoallergenic masks may be ordered for those who have sensitive skin.
- Several studies indicate that wearing a mask helps protect against the risk of infection
- Wearing of masks
 - Can protect patients, residents, and clients by preventing the transmission of the virus from infected healthcare workers who may have few or no symptoms.
 - Protect unvaccinated healthcare workers from infected patients or visitors with influenza that has not yet been recognized.
- Is already available as part of PPE for other infection control issues

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Considerations when wearing a mask:

The following points are observed when using a mask/respirator:

1. Masks are for single use only.
2. Masks must completely cover the nose and mouth.
3. Do not touch the mask when in use.
4. Change the mask when wet or soiled.
5. Drop all masks into appropriate receptacle when finished with them.
6. Masks are not allowed to dangle around the neck.
7. Wash hands after removing mask.

No set time designated when you need to change your mask.

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Other infection control measures

- Rapid identification of ill patients,
- Hand hygiene,
- Cough etiquette,
- Staying home when you are ill, etc.

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Scope

- Applies to
 - all SCHR employees (unionized and non-unionized/OOS), other privileged/credentialed professionals, residents, volunteers, students, contractors, and vendors (collectively, these individuals are referred to as “covered individuals”) who attend a *Patient Care Location*.
 - to any other persons who attend a *Patient Care Location* (these individuals are referred to as “Visitors”).
 - visitors are encouraged to get a flu shot, not to visit when they are ill or just recovering, and to observe hand hygiene and cough etiquette. If they are not vaccinated, they are expected to wear a mask, and the facility can provide one.

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Definitions

Patient Care Location (Provincial)

- any building, property, or site owned, leased, rented, or operated by SCHR where there are patients, residents, or clients who are receiving health care; and
- any patient/client/resident home or other location where Covered Individuals interact with and/or provide health care to the patient/client/resident in the course of his/her work for SCHR.
- but does not include any location designated by SCHR to be excluded from the definition of *Patient Care Location*.

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Definitions

Patient Care Location (exclusions by SCHR)

- All cafeterias, staff rooms or other designated lunch areas, tables or locations (while eating or drinking only).
- The stand-alone maintenance facility on Riverwood drive.
- Stand-alone ambulance bay locations (not attached to any facility) that do not have; or the potential to have any patients/clients/residents attend.
- CVA's when traveling without a patient/resident/ client.

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Vaccination Required Date

- established annually by the Chief Medical Health Officer
 - all persons covered under this policy are required to be vaccinated against influenza or wear a mask in accordance with the Policy
 - based on the analysis of annual influenza epidemiology
 - 2014 – 2015 season – December 1st

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Vaccination Required Period

- A period of time determined by the Chief Medical Health Officer and starting on the *Vaccination Required Date*.
- usually from late November to late March but depends on the actual circulation of the influenza virus each year (which may vary).
- Covered Individuals will be required to be vaccinated against influenza or wear a surgical/procedure mask in accordance with the Policy.

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RESPONSIBILITIES

All Covered Individuals

- Annually, must advise SCHR of their influenza immunization status by the *Vaccination Required Date* or wear a mask.
 - Including Visitors, during the annual *Vaccination Required Period*, if not vaccinated against influenza, are required to wear a surgical/procedural mask provided by SCHR while at a *Patient Care Location*.
 - If wearing a surgical/procedural mask, are responsible for maintaining their mask in good condition as per SCHR protocols.
 - During an influenza outbreak in an SCHR facility, the policy is suspended at the outbreak location and the SCHR'S outbreak policy will apply.
 - Must continue to use personal protective equipment and abide by the SCHR infection control practices to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases, including influenza.
 - Covered Individuals who experience influenza like illness/respiratory infection should follow SCHR established reporting protocols.
 - Covered Individuals who witness any instances of non-compliance with this policy are expected to report the incident of non-compliance immediately to their supervisor.
- SCHR will inform Visitors of the requirements of this Policy and will make surgical/procedure masks available to Visitors.

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Compliance/Non-Compliance

- During the 2014-15 *Vaccination Required Period* it is expected that staff will comply with this policy. Performance management measures will be used to address non-compliance with the policy.
- Beyond complying with the policy, healthcare workers are encouraged to be an example to others and support immunization or wearing of masks by others in patient care areas during influenza transmission season.
- If a staff member ignores this requirement, the health region would handle it in a similar way as any other patient safety issue.

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Compliance/Non-Compliance

What do I do if a colleague tells me they have not been immunized and I see them working without a mask?

- For the benefit and protection of our vulnerable patients, health care workers are asked to support and encourage one another in following the policy.
- Encourage each other on all aspects of the policy, including hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and staying home when sick.
- If policy is ignored, report the behavior to your supervisor, in the same way you would with any other patient safety concern.

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Does the policy apply during influenza outbreaks?

- During an outbreak, extra measures are needed to prevent further transmission of illness in facilities, as a higher risk exists at that time.
- This policy is suspended at the outbreak location and the facility's existing outbreak policy comes into effect.
 - This may include not allowing unvaccinated health care workers to continue working in the outbreak facility unless they are on antivirals.
- During other respiratory outbreaks (eg. RSV, parainfluenza), the immunize or mask policy will continue – unimmunized workers need to wear a mask at all times.

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Is this policy different from routine procedures for infection control?

- Yes, this policy requires unvaccinated staff to wear a mask at all times in patient care areas during influenza season
- As part of SCHR infection control (routine practices and additional precautions) and outbreak policies, everyone is required to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (respiratory protection, eye protection and hand hygiene), when caring for ill residents/patients,
 - A surgical mask that covers both the nose and mouth is considered adequate protection against infections spread by large droplets that are transmitted by close contact and generally travel only short distances (up to 3 feet) from infected clients who are coughing or sneezing.

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Is this policy different from routine procedures for infection control?

- For example, if you need to wear a mask as part of your personal protective equipment for providing care to a patient with a droplet transmitted infection, you should follow the appropriate procedures (hand hygiene, use of eye protection, gowns, etc.), including putting on a new mask prior to patient contact and taking off the mask after patient contact.
- If airborne precautions are required (tuberculosis),
 - then the mask should be substituted for an N-95 respirator and usual infection control practices for airborne precautions followed. Once care is completed in a precaution room, you would remove the PPE and if you are not vaccinated for influenza, put on a new procedure mask before moving to your next task.

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Questions?

