

GUIDANCE FOR MANAGING RESPIRATORY ILLNESS OUTBREAKS IN SCHOOLS & CHILDCARE SETTINGS

A respiratory illness outbreak should be suspected when the number of people with the illness exceeds what is expected as normal or typical. To reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses, staff and attendees should remain at home if symptomatic. If individuals are symptomatic while in attendance at school, daycare, childcare, or work, they should be immediately sent home. Respiratory illnesses in school-age children are often self-limiting.

However, testing is encouraged because certain illnesses do require treatment. In the absence of testing, outbreaks of respiratory illness are assumed to be COVID-19 until a diagnosis is confirmed through provider-based testing.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of respiratory illness can appear 1-14 days after exposure and can have varying degrees of illness ranging from asymptomatic to severe. Common symptoms include one or more of the following:

- Fever or feeling feverish/having chills ($\geq 100.4^{\circ}$ F)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Exclusion

Any respiratory illness outbreak without laboratory confirmation of the organism causing illness will default to the COVID-19 exclusion criteria.

COVID-19:

Exclude all children and/or staff until:

1. At least five (5) days have passed since symptoms first appeared or if asymptomatic, since positive test result; and,
2. Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications, and
3. Any vomiting or diarrhea has resolved for at least 24 hours, and
4. All other symptoms have improved.

If asymptomatic or symptoms resolve after 5 days, they can discontinue isolation but must continue to wear a well-fitting mask around others for 5 additional days. If unable or unwilling to wear a mask when around others after day 5, continue to isolate for a full 10 days. Negative home tests will not be accepted for return from 5-day exclusion. Only tests conducted by a medical professional will be accepted for return from exclusion. Testing can be done with a medical provider or at a local pharmacy.

Influenza & RSV:

- If the person has tested positive for either influenza or RSV they must be excluded until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications and feel well enough to participate in activities.
- If the person is NOT tested, then default to COVID-19 exclusions.

Proper Ventilation, Cleaning & Disinfecting

- Facilities should evaluate indoor ventilation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommend increasing natural ventilation by opening windows and using indoor fans or running the HVAC system or swamp coolers. If available, air purifiers can be added to enhance effectiveness of these strategies. More information on strategies to improve ventilation in various settings can be found [here](#).
- Facilities should use disinfection products that are effective against influenza virus. Many Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved disinfectants include common household cleaning agents such as Lysol, Clorox, and Pine Sol. Facilities should always follow manufacturer's guidelines for product use. High-touch surfaces like doorknobs, toys, counters, desks, chairs, changing tables, etc. must be wiped down. An EPA approved disinfection products effective against influenza can be found [here](#).

Handwashing:

- Hands should be thoroughly and frequently washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This should include vigorous rubbing of hands, thoroughly rinsing hands under a stream of clean warm water, and drying hands with disposable towels. It is especially important to ensure proper handwashing in the following scenarios:
 - After using the toilet or changing diapers
 - Before eating, preparing, or handling food
 - Before giving yourself or someone else medication
 - Alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol may be used when soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly soiled.

If an outbreak is suspected, please notify the Office of State Epidemiology as soon as possible by emailing dpbhepi@health.nv.gov or calling 775-400-0333.

References:

- [1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Flu Season](#)
- [2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention RSV](#)
- [3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19](#)
- [4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Similarities and Differences between Flu and COVID-19](#)