

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

December 1, 2017

Flu policy for visitors in effect at all NH facilities

As of today, all visitors to Northern Health (NH) facilities are being asked to wear a surgical mask if they haven't received their annual flu shot. The policy is part of the province's strategy to prevent the spread of flu and protect already vulnerable patients from a potentially fatal infection.

"Patients and clients in hospitals and long term care facilities often have weakened immune systems that put them at greater risk of serious complications from influenza," says Northern Health Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. Sandra Allison. "The best way to protect not only yourself but the people around you is to get a flu shot, even if you're normally a healthy individual."

The policy is applicable to all patient care areas in Northern Health hospitals, long-term care homes and other health facilities between December 1, 2017 and approximately March 31, 2018. Flu shots for visitors are free and can be obtained at your family doctor, walk-in clinics or pharmacies. The ImmunizeBC website lists all clinics across B.C. at immunizebc.ca.

People who have not had a flu shot can obtain a mask at a nursing station or outpatient reception desk. Doctors, staff, students and volunteers are also required to get immunized or wear a mask in patient care areas during the flu season.

Flu shots are free in B.C. for all children from six months to five years of age, people 65 years and older, Aboriginal people, those with chronic health conditions or compromised immune systems, and for anyone who lives or works with a person who is at higher risk of problems from the flu. Flu shots are also free for anyone visiting any Northern Health facility, including people who are accompanying patients to their appointments.

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