

September 9, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

As healthcare leaders in Alberta, we are committed to improving patient/client safety and employee health by reducing the impact of seasonal influenza.

Influenza is ranked among the top 10 infectious diseases affecting the Canadian population. Last year there were 58 outbreaks in Alberta health care facilities. As well, sixty-two Albertans died related to influenza infection.

The healthcare worker immunization rate in Alberta declined in the 2015/16 season to 61%. After all the effort and interventions to increase healthcare worker rates, we have lost the gains made in the last three years. The ultimate goal is for 100% of healthcare workers, who are able to receive vaccine, to be immunized.

Preventing health care-associated transmission of influenza protects patients/clients, healthcare workers, and our communities. As influenza spreads easily person to person, healthcare workers have a duty to limit the transmission of influenza to their patients/clients. The most effective way to prevent the transmission is annual influenza immunization. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization states, "Influenza immunization is an essential component of the standard of care for all healthcare workers for the protection of patients". In addition, immunizing healthcare workers prevents lost work time during outbreaks which would negatively impact patient care.

To promote the health and safety of patients/clients and our workforce, we encourage all healthcare workers, health professionals, physicians, and volunteers to receive annual influenza vaccine. Our goal is to increase influenza immunization rates, reduce employee absenteeism during influenza season, and reduce transmission of influenza from healthcare workers to patients.

As leaders in healthcare, you are integral to the success of the influenza immunization program.

Regards,



Karen Grimsrud, MD
Chief Medical Officer of Health
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Regards,



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