

Advance Antiviral Prescriptions for Influenza Outbreaks

Date: Monday, November 29, 2021

To: Central Zone Physicians and Nurse Practitioners

CC: Seniors Health; Zone Medical Director; Communicable Disease Control; Infection Prevention and Control; Medical Officers of Health; Workplace Health and Safety; Covenant Occupational Health and Safety

From: Dr. Digby Horne, Medical Officer of Health, Central Zone

Subject: Advance Prescriptions for Antiviral Medication During Influenza Outbreaks

Provision of antiviral medication during influenza outbreaks for:

- residents living in long term care (LTC) and congregate living settings (CLS)
- unimmunized staff working in LTC and CLS

Influenza viruses circulate throughout our communities every year. In anticipation of influenza outbreaks occurring in long term care and congregate living sites, we are requesting your assistance with preparing individuals under your care (i.e. living or working in a LTC or CLS) for the upcoming influenza season. Congregate living sites include lodges, manors, seniors' residences, and designated supportive living facilities.

All individuals should be encouraged to receive their annual influenza immunization. However, even with good immunization rates, outbreaks of influenza commonly occur in congregate living sites in which there is communal dining.

OSELTAMIVIR RECOMMENDATIONS DURING INFLUENZA OUTBREAKS

When an influenza outbreak is declared, the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) recommends the following:

- All residents, whether immunized or not, receive oseltamivir antiviral prophylaxis.
- Unimmunized staff (**including unimmunized physicians making site visits**) are required to take oseltamivir antiviral prophylaxis. Staff who are not immunized and are not taking the recommended antiviral prophylaxis should be excluded from working as outlined in the AHS Guidelines for Outbreak Prevention, Control and Management: www.ahs.ca/assets/healthinfo/flu/hi-flu-care-and-treat-guidelines.pdf.
- Antiviral prophylaxis is continued for 7 days after onset of symptoms of the last resident case, usually a minimum of 10 days. An oseltamivir dosing chart is available online at:
 - AHS MOH Central Zone webpage [www.ahs.ca/czmoh; *Outbreak Management>Supportive Living> Outbreak Management Resources*]: www.ahs.ca/assets/info/hp/phys/cen/if-hp-phys-moh-cz-antiviral-dosing-recommendations.pdf.
 - Roche Canada Tamiflu product monograph: www.rochecanada.com/PMS/Tamiflu/Tamiflu_PM_E.pdf

ACCESS TO OSELTAMIVIR PROPHYLAXIS - RESIDENTS

To facilitate prompt implementation of antiviral prophylaxis:

- a) **Residents of all CLS are asked to contact their physicians in order to receive an advance prescription for oseltamivir antiviral prophylaxis** in preparation for the start of influenza season.
- b) Please fax a 10-day prescription with a single refill to the resident's pharmacy. Prescriptions will remain on hand until such time the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) declares an influenza outbreak at the resident's site or for 1 year, whichever comes first. Follow existing arrangements in place with LTC pharmacists to pre-arrange access to antivirals for LTC residents.

ACCESS TO OSELTAMIVIR PROPHYLAXIS - STAFF

- o Alberta Health Services WHS and Covenant Health OHS have a process in place for staff requiring antiviral prophylaxis. Staff will be advised to contact their respective WHS/OHS department at the time of an influenza outbreak for assessment and advice.
- o Non-AHS/Covenant Health staff will be directed to contact their own physician before, or at the time of, an influenza outbreak to obtain a prescription.

ALBERTA INFLUENZA ANTIVIRAL DRUG POLICY

The Alberta Influenza Antiviral Drug Policy as applied to vulnerable populations living in congregate living settings defines who is eligible for provincially funded antiviral medication during influenza outbreaks. Information regarding billing can be found in the Pharmacy Benefact.

If you have questions, please contact the Central Zone MOH on-call at (403) 356-6430.

Thank you for your continued assistance and co-operation.