



COUNTY OF YOLO

Health and Human Services Agency

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To: All Health Care Facilities and Providers in Yolo County

From: Aimee Sisson, MD, MPH, Yolo County Health Officer

Date: October 3, 2023

Subject: Masking and Vaccination for the 23-24 Winter Respiratory Virus Season

This memo provides guidance to health care facilities and providers regarding the prevention of respiratory virus disease among patients, visitors, and staff during the upcoming fall and winter respiratory virus season.

Background

During the 2022-2023 winter respiratory virus season, influenza, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) were in co-circulation, creating a significant burden of disease for the health care system in both inpatient and outpatient settings. Co-circulation of influenza, COVID-19, and RSV is possible during the upcoming 2023-2024 season. Fortunately, vaccines are now available against all 3 viruses and masking provides additional protection against viral transmission in health care settings.

This guidance attempts to balance patient, health care worker, and facility autonomy with the need to protect patients, health care workers, and visitors against respiratory virus transmission in health care settings. Providers and facilities are encouraged to develop their own respiratory virus prevention and control policies and plans that are tailored to their unique needs and responsive to evolving situations.

The Yolo County Health Officer will monitor respiratory virus surveillance data throughout the upcoming respiratory virus season and may issue additional Orders if needed to control disease transmission.

Influenza

Today, I issued a Health Officer Order mandating influenza vaccination for all health care workers in Yolo County. Similar to orders issued in prior years, the Order requires health care workers who are not vaccinated against influenza for the current season to wear a surgical mask in patient care areas for the duration of influenza season (November 1 through April 30).

COVID-19

All health care workers in Yolo County are strongly recommended to receive an updated COVID vaccine prior to November 1, 2023. The updated vaccine targets the

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variants currently circulating (XBB). Vaccination against COVID-19 protects against severe disease, hospitalization, and death; reduces the likelihood of infection; decreases the risk of long COVID; and shortens the duration of infection.

Unlike for influenza, current state law (Cal/OSHA ATD) does not require health care facilities to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to employees with occupational exposure. In addition, the COVID-19 vaccine is no longer available for free from the Federal government, such that requiring employers to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to employees would be an unfunded mandate. Therefore, COVID-19 has not been added to the influenza vaccinate-or-mask Order despite the well-known benefits of COVID-19 vaccination. Employers who are able to purchase and provide the COVID-19 vaccine for employees are strongly encouraged to do so.

RSV

Vaccines are now available to protect against RSV. The CDC recommends that adults 60 and older may receive a single dose of RSV vaccine after discussing with their health care provider whether the vaccine is right for them. Those who are immunocompromised or have chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for severe RSV disease and will benefit from vaccination. Pregnant persons should also receive an RSV vaccine during weeks 32-36 of pregnancy to protect babies from severe RSV. An RSV vaccine is also recommended for all infants 8 months and younger and for infants and children 8-19 months old who are at increased risk for severe RSV disease.

Source Control Masking for Health Care Workers

On July 28, 2023, the California Department of Public Health issued [Guidance for Face Coverings as Source Control in Healthcare Settings](#). CDPH encourages healthcare facilities to develop and implement their own facility-specific plans about face masking for source control, based on local circumstances such as patient/resident vulnerability, ability to maintain staffing, and viral activity. Yolo County Public Health encourages facilities to review the CDPH guidance and to develop a facility-specific plan, which may be more restrictive than Yolo County Health Officer Orders, but cannot be more lenient.

Source Control Masking for Patients

Yolo County Public Health encourages facilities to make masks available at entrances, along with signage requesting patients with respiratory symptoms don a mask prior to entry.

Source Control Masking for Visitors

[CDPH guidance](#) recommends that visitors be asked to defer their visit if they have symptoms of a respiratory infection. If visitation is essential, such as for end-of-life, facilities should require symptomatic visitors to wear a mask and to offer an alternative, such as an outdoor visit, if a visitor refuses to mask. Health care facilities may consider implementing source control masking policies for visitors based on the same local circumstances as for health care providers.