

Respiratory Infection, Institutional Outbreaks

Information Sheet

What is considered a respiratory outbreak in an institution?

When three (3) or more resident/staff present with any two (2) or more respiratory symptoms (e.g. nasal congestion, cough, abnormal temperature, sore throat or hoarseness of voice) it is considered a respiratory outbreak. A respiratory outbreak may consist of a common cold, Influenza A or B, different types of pneumonia or other causes.

What is the incidence of respiratory outbreaks?

A survey done by Public Health Departments in 1999 showed 51.1 percent of respiratory outbreaks were caused by Influenza, 4.6 percent by respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), 2.6 percent by rhinovirus, 2.6 percent by parainfluenza and 1.4 percent by other viruses.

When should I report respiratory outbreak?

All respiratory outbreaks should be reported as soon as there are three (3) or more residents with two (2) or more respiratory symptoms.

What measures should be followed if a respiratory outbreak is suspected?

Report outbreak to our local health unit.

- Send sick staff members home
- Confine residents to their rooms
- Post signs about outbreak
- Advise volunteers, family and staff to see their doctor if symptomatic
- Enhance hand washing and general cleaning
- Restrict activities until the outbreak is declared over
- Keep staff informed