



BULLETIN

DATE: August 24, 2012

HSA encourages members to vaccinate against flu; will investigate implications of new policy requiring surgical masks for those who don't

BC's Provincial Health Officer Perry Kendall yesterday announced new measures for influenza prevention among health care workers and patients.

As in previous years, health care workers who work in patient care areas are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated annually against influenza. However, under the new policy, if health care workers chose not to be vaccinated they will be required to wear a surgical/procedure mask during the flu season – generally the end of November to the end of March. During an influenza outbreak, the mask-wearing policy will be suspended, and health care workers who have not been vaccinated may be redeployed or told to stay home.

Some HSA members may have medical, religious, or other personal reasons for not getting a flu shot. In these cases, employers often attempt to find alternate work if possible. In the event that the Provincial Health Officer declares a flu outbreak at your facility, health care workers who refuse the vaccination can be sent home without pay.

HSA encourages health professionals to get immunized against seasonal influenza. Keep your immunization record current and your employee health file up to date by receiving a flu shot at an employer-run clinic.

HSA is reviewing the new mask policy with occupational health and safety and legal experts, and will investigate the implications for members. In addition, in order to encourage increased participation in the vaccination program, HSA will work to encourage employers ensure better access to on-site vaccination clinics.