



## Preventing Pneumonia and the Flu #31-12-22

Direct support professionals make the difference in early identification and treatment of pneumonia and the flu. Based on your observations, you may recognize a change in the status of an individual you support that would require further evaluation. If you notice any of the signs and symptoms listed throughout this alert, please seek support from a medical professional.

It's important to know that Ohioans with developmental disabilities may be at higher risk for pneumonia and flu due to chronic lung conditions like asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis. Swallowing difficulties, gastroesophageal reflux disease, seizure disorder, tube feeding, cerebral palsy, and being suppressed can all increase the risk of aspiration.

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness. Older adults and people with other respiratory illnesses are at higher risk for pneumonia. Common signs of pneumonia include cough, fever, trouble breathing, fast heartbeat, shaking, or chills.

Aspiration occurs when a person accidentally inhales particles into their airway; report and document it quickly.

Seasonal influenza, also known as the flu, is a viral illness that causes fever, tiredness, cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, body aches, and headaches. It is usually spread from person to person by coughing and sneezing.

## Pneumonia: Symptoms, Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prevention



### Fast Facts

- In 2021, 120 Ohioans with IDD died due to pneumonia (62) and aspiration pneumonia (58).
- Pneumonia and influenza were the third leading causes of hospitalizations in 2021 for those we serve.
- Pneumonia was the leading cause of hospitalization for Ohioans with IDD from 2016 to 2020.
- During this period, the leading cause of non-accidental/suspicious deaths was aspiration pneumonia.
- Ohioans with developmental disabilities were twice as likely to be admitted to the hospital for the flu in 2017 as people without disabilities.

### Get a Flu Shot

Flu vaccines are designed to protect against the influenza viruses that experts predict will be the most common during the upcoming season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that people get their flu shots before the end of October. However, getting a late flu shot can be better than not getting one at all.



## FOLLOW THESE 3 STEPS TO FIGHT THE FLU



The flu (influenza) is a contagious disease that can be severe. Almost every year, the flu causes disease in millions of persons, hundreds of thousands get hospitalized, and tens of thousands die because of the flu. The CDCs urge you to take the following measures to protect yourself and others from the flu.

### YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SHOULD GET VACCINATED!

The first and most important step to protect yourself against flu viruses is getting a flu vaccine each year. All persons 6 months of age or older should get a flu vaccine, if possible before the end of October, or as soon as possible if after October.



Flu vaccines are offered in many places, such as physician offices, clinics, health departments, drugstores, and university health centers, as well as from many employers and even at some schools.



Protect yourself. Protect your family. Get vaccinated. #FightTheFlu

Learn More: <https://cdc.gov/flu/consumer/vaccinations.htm>

### AVOID

Avoid any close contact with sick people; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; cover your nose and mouth with a paper towel when coughing or sneezing, wash your hands frequently (with soap and water), and clean and sanitize the surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with the flu viruses.

If you get sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Please remember to cover your nose and mouth with a paper towel when coughing or sneezing, and throw the paper towel into the garbage bin after using it. Stay at home until at least for 24 hours after the fever is gone, except to receive medical care or for other needs. (Before resuming your regular activities, your fever must have disappeared for about 24 hours without using a drug to decrease it).

Learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/treatment/treatment.htm>

### TAKE ANTIVIRAL DRUGS IF PRESCRIBED BY YOUR DOCTOR!



If you catch the flu, antiviral drugs can be used to treat it. Antiviral drugs can alleviate the symptoms and shorten the duration of the disease. They can also prevent severe flu complications, such as pneumonia.

The CDCs recommend the use of antiviral drugs during the early stages of treatment for persons who are very sick from the flu (such as: people who are hospitalized) and those who got it and are at high risk of severe complications, due to their age or to having a high-risk condition.



Learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/treatment/treatment.htm>

[espanol.cdc.gov/enes/flu](https://espanol.cdc.gov/enes/flu)

COMBATE LA INFLUENZA



## Know the Signs and Symptoms

Pneumonia	Aspiration Pneumonia	Flu
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sweating</li> <li>Fever</li> <li>Shortness of breath</li> <li>Wheezing</li> <li>Fatigue</li> <li>Cough, especially involving sputum (mucus)</li> <li>Difficulty swallowing</li> <li>Chest pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular coughing or sneezing while eating</li> <li>Gurgling sounds after eating</li> <li>Sudden coughing, wheezing or hoarseness</li> <li> Drooling</li> <li>Changes in breathing patterns</li> <li>Excessive throat clearing</li> <li>Avoids eating, especially favorite foods because they are uncomfortable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fever above 100 degrees</li> <li>Sore throat</li> <li>Fatigue and weakness that can last up to two to three weeks</li> <li>Cough</li> <li>General aches and pains</li> <li>Intense headache</li> <li>Runny or stuffy nose</li> </ul>

### Take Action

- Use your training, equipment, and skills to take someone's vitals.
  - A pulse oximeter can measure a person's oxygen. To learn more, watch this [quick video](#).
- Call a nurse, doctor, or get assistance immediately if a person is experiencing signs of pneumonia.
- Document a person's condition (including vitals) and any changes so you can monitor and report.

## Prevention Tips to Protect You and Others

- Stay home when sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wash hands often
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth
- Get enough sleep
- Exercise and avoid stress
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Avoid close contact with sick people