



10/17/2025

Dear Residents / Resident Representatives and Family Members,

As the respiratory virus season approaches, we wanted to reach out to you with important information about how we are working to protect everyone here, and how you can help us keep our community healthy. Because many respiratory illnesses can spread rapidly in congregate settings like nursing homes, prevention is especially important for our residents, staff, and visitors.

Why This Matters

- Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for serious illness, hospitalization, or worse outcomes, if exposed to respiratory viruses such as influenza (“flu”), COVID-19, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), and others.
- Close living arrangements and shared spaces in long-term care settings make respiratory infections more likely to spread. CDC specifically notes that long-term care facilities are vulnerable to outbreaks and recommends robust preventive efforts.
- The State of New Jersey has recently issued an **Executive Directive No. 25-003**, which ensures that anyone aged 6 months or older can receive a COVID-19 vaccine this respiratory illness season without needing a prescription, to remove barriers to vaccination.

What We Are Doing

To protect our residents, we are implementing the following preventive measures:

1. Vaccinations

We encourage all residents, staff, and visitors to stay up to date with recommended immunizations, including:

- Influenza vaccine annually (flu shots), COVID-19 vaccine, per the NJDOH standing order and state directive.
- Other vaccines as recommended (e.g. pneumonia, RSV, etc.), when available and appropriate.

2. Monitoring & Masking

- We will monitor for increases in community respiratory virus activity. When levels are elevated, we may ask visitors and staff to wear masks in the facility. The CDC’s “Viral Respiratory Pathogens Toolkit for Nursing Homes” recommends masking by visitors and personnel during high community spread, and in some cases, residents when outside their rooms.
- Masks help reduce the spread of illness — especially from people who may have symptoms or who may be contagious but not yet aware.

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3. Infection Control Practices

- Hand hygiene (staff, visitors, residents) — frequent hand washing or use of hand sanitizer.
- Increased cleaning of common areas and high-touch surfaces.
- Testing and isolation of suspected cases in residents or staff.
- Appropriate use of protective equipment by staff.

4. Visitor Policies

- **Please do not visit if you are ill**, have respiratory symptoms (cough, cold, sore throat, fever, etc.), or have been exposed recently to someone with a contagious respiratory illness. Even mild symptoms can put our residents at risk.
- When visiting during times of higher risk (e.g. elevated community spread), we may request or require that visitors wear masks, especially in shared spaces or when visiting residents face-to-face.

How You Can Help

Your cooperation is very important. Here's what you can do to help protect your loved ones and everyone in the facility:

- Get vaccinated and help encourage others to do the same.
- Stay home if you are sick, even if your symptoms are mild.
- Wear a mask when requested and follow guidelines for hand hygiene.
- Keep up with recommended vaccines for yourself and ask questions about what's best.
- Communicate with us if you notice signs of illness in yourself or your loved one.

*If you have any further questions, please reach out to Preferred Care at Mercer's Infection Prevention Nurse.

Reference Information

- **CDC** "Viral Respiratory Pathogens Toolkit for Nursing Homes" — strategies for vaccination, masking, testing, visitor policy, and outbreak response. [CDC](#)
 - **CDC** interim guidance for Influenza outbreak management in long-term care settings. [CDC](#)
- **New Jersey Department of Health** Executive Directive No. 25-003, ensuring access to COVID-19 vaccines for those aged 6 months and older. [Insider NJ](#)

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