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Name: HPEI Respiratory Illness (COVID-19 and Influenza) Management Policy

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Policy and Procedures Manual

RESPIRATORY ILLNESS (COVID-19 AND INFLUENZA) MANAGEMENT

Health PEI – Human Resources		POLICY & PROCEDURES
Applies To:	All Health PEI Healthcare Workers (HCWs)	
Monitoring:	Interim Human Resources Executive	
Approving Authority:	Executive Leadership Team	
Date:	Effective: September 26, 2023 Update Effective: May 5, 2025 Next Review: May 5, 2028	
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1.0 POLICY

- 1.1 Health PEI is committed to maintaining a safe work environment and to protecting its Healthcare Workers (HCWs), patients, clients, residents, and members of the public from the risk of infection from, and complications associated with respiratory illnesses, specifically; COVID-19, and Influenza.
- 1.2 Health PEI and HCW's have a duty to actively promote, implement and comply with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to decrease the risk of infection for HCWs, patients, residents, clients, and members of the public.
- 1.3 Respiratory illness management measures outlined in this policy come into effect during respiratory illness season only.

Respiratory Illness Management

- 1.4 Once Health PEI has declared the policy is activated and in effect for the respiratory illness season, HCW's comply with the following respiratory illness management measures until the policy is deactivated:
 - (a) Universal masking is mandatory for all direct patient care;
 - (b) Wear a surgical mask when within two meters of any patient;
 - (c) Follow droplet/contact precautions when caring for a patient diagnosed with COVID-19, Influenza, or experiencing Influenza-like Illness (ILI) as indicated;
 - (d) Follow routine infection prevention and control practices, e.g., hand hygiene, cleaning of patient care equipment, and cleaning of the environment.
- 1.5 **Accommodation Requests:** HCWs who require an accommodation to the surgical mask requirement set out in Section 1.4 of this policy due to a protected ground under the *Human Rights Act* must submit a written request with supporting documentation to [Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness, Employee Abilities and Return to Work Team](#).

HCW Responsibilities:

- 1.6 All HCW's are required to:
- Comply with this policy.
 - Comply with the respiratory illness management measures when the policy is activated until the policy is deactivated.
 - Request an accommodation for an exemption to the surgical mask requirement when required.
 - Participate in the [HPEI Staff/Physician Respiratory Illness Reporting and Work Restriction Protocol](#) as required by Health PEI.

Policy Non-Compliance

- 1.7 In accordance with Health PEI Human Resources policies, collective agreements and applicable legislation, and directives, HCWs failure to comply with this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Droplet/Contact Precautions:	Initiated by HCW's to prevent the transmission of infection when caring for a patient with COVID-19 or Influenza-like illness (ILI), and when there is a risk of contamination of blood or body fluids. Includes: private room or spatial separation of greater than two meters; mask/facial protection (eye protection) when within two meters of a patient; gown; and gloves.
Healthcare Worker (HCW):	All persons involved in providing care and/or services within Health PEI facilities and programs, which includes all employees (casual, permanent, temporary, full-time and part-time employees), physicians (salaried, fee-for-service, contract and locum), students, volunteers and contract workers.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):	Personal protective equipment (PPE) are items worn to provide a barrier to help prevent potential exposure to infectious disease. These items include: – Gloves – Gowns – Surgical masks – Fit tested respirators (N95 masks, half-face respirator) – Eye protection (goggles, face shield, mask with visor)
Respiratory Illness:	Impact the airways and the lungs that affect human respiration. They are caused by organisms such as viruses or bacteria that affect the respiratory system. COVID-19 and Influenza are the two respiratory illnesses covered under this policy. Respiratory illnesses are expressed as fever greater than (38.5c) * AND cough and/or sore throat (in the absence of a known cause). Respiratory illness may include some or all of the following signs or symptoms: fever* or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache, and fatigue. * <i>It is important to note that not everyone with Influenza or COVID-19 will have a fever.</i>

Respiratory Illness Season:	Generally, fall, winter and early spring. Health PEI will determine and announce when respiratory illness seasons begins and ends to indicate policy activation and deactivation.
Universal Masking:	Wearing a surgical mask at all times in the Workplace. Surgical masks are worn as source control to protect others or as personal protective equipment to the wearer. Universal masking is one of many control measures put in place to prevent the spread of infection.
Workplace:	Includes all property owned and/or occupied by Health PEI.

3.0 PURPOSE/SCOPE

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline respiratory illness management requirements for all Health PEI HCWs.
- 3.2 Vaccination is the most effective strategy for preventing COVID-19 and Influenza. Masks also help to control source of respiratory illness in infected HCW's who may be asymptomatic and also protect unvaccinated HCW's from asymptomatic patients or visitors. Other important infection control measures that help to prevent transmission, include:
 - (a) Droplet/contact precautions (airborne precautions when completing aerosol generating procedures for suspected/confirmed COVID-19 cases);
 - (b) Hand hygiene;
 - (c) Cleaning patient care equipment and the surrounding environment;
 - (d) Staying home when ill.
- 3.3 Refer to *HPEI Communicable Disease Immunization and Tuberculosis (TB) Screening Policy* for immunization information.

4.0 APPLICATION

This policy applies to all Health PEI HCW's.

5.0 PROCEDURES

Activation

- 5.1 The Director of Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness and Director of Infection Prevention & Control recommend the policy and procedures be approved for activation by the Chief Operation Officer (COO), Chief Nursing Officer (CNO), Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and Interim Human Resource Executive.
 - Chief Public Health Office (CPHO) datapoints, increase in hospitalizations in confirmed COVID-19 and Influenza patients and respiratory illness surveillance data signaling onset of transmission in our communities informs the determination.
- 5.2 The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) provides notice to all HCW's when the policy is activated for the respiratory illness season.
- 5.3 HCWs comply with the required measures for the duration of the respiratory season when the policy is activated.

Deactivation

- 5.4 The Director of Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness and Director of Infection Prevention & Control recommend the policy, and associated measures, be deactivated be approved for deactivation by the COO, CNO, CMO and Interim Human Resources Executive.
- CPHO datapoints, decrease in hospitalizations in confirmed COVID-19 and Influenza patients and respiratory illness surveillance data signaling slowing down or end of transmission in our communities informs the determination.
- 5.5 The ELT provides notice to all HCW's when the policy is deactivated for the respiratory illness season.

6.0 MONITORING

- 6.1 The Interim Human Resources Executive is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed every three years as per Health PEI's policy review cycle and standards.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding Section 6.1, this policy is subject to regular review and update as guidance from the CPHO, occupational health and safety protocols, and public health information.

7.0 REFERENCES

Related Documents

Canada Immunization Guide
 National Advisory Committee on Immunization
 National Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines for Immunization Providers
 HPEI Communicable Disease Immunization and Tuberculosis (TB) Screening Policy
 Immunization Regulations
 P.E.I. Occupational Health and Safety Act & Regulations
 P.E.I. Public Health Act
 Public Health Agency of Canada
 PEI Human Rights Act

Rescinded Policies

Influenza Immunization and Management Policy
 COVID-19 Immunization and Management Policy

References

Capital District Health Authority. (2013). Influenza Immunization.
 Horizon Health Network. (2012). Immunization of Personnel.
 Public Health Agency of Canada. (2013). National Advisory Committee on Immunization: Statement on Seasonal Influenza Vaccine for 2013-2014.
 Public Health Agency of Canada. (2013). Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care.
 Sunnybrook Hospital. (2014). HCW Influenza Vaccination Policy.
 Vancouver Coastal Health. (2016). Influenza Prevention Policy.

Appendices

N/A

8.0 STAKEHOLDER REVIEW

Group/Committee	Dates of Review
Legal Services	November 1, 2024
Director, Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness	March 7, 2025
Employee Health Nurses	March 20, 2025
Human Resource Managers	April 17, 2025
Director, Infection Prevention & Control	March 11, 2025
Union Partners (PEINU, UPSE, CUPE, IUOE)	April 17, 2025

9.0 REVIEW HISTORY

Review Dates:	March 2024	March 2025	