

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE: Stay on Top of CDC-Recommended Isolation Requirements for the Novel H1N1 Virus

Are you aware of this novel requirement?

True or false? Wearing a surgical mask will suffice when caring for a resident with novel H1N1 infection? The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention currently recommends that "any healthcare provider use a respirator [fit-tested, disposable N95 or better]," **Michael Bell, MD**, associate director for infection control in the agency's Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion, told **Eli** at press time in July. The directive, in fact, applies to healthcare personnel who enter the rooms of patients in isolation with "confirmed, suspected, or probable novel H1N1" flu, according to the CDC's written guidance.

\Rationale: The agency views the more conservative approach as necessary until more is known about the new virus' specific transmission. In other words, keep up with the CDC's infection control procedures for suspected or confirmed novel H1N1 at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm.

Tip: To keep from getting the flu from a patient with suspected or confirmed infection, "you also have to protect your eyes from droplets in the air," advises **Deborah Burdsall, RN, MSN, CIC**, infection preventionist at Lutheran Home in Arlington Heights, Ill. And you have to keep surfaces and your hands clean, she adds. Continue isolating a patient for seven days from the onset of flu symptoms or until the person's symptoms resolve, whichever is longer, advises the CDC.

Resource: If your facility is interested in developing a respiratory protection program for staff, check out the California Association of Health Facilities' model program (www.cahfdownload.com/cahf/dpp/CAHF_MRPP.pdf). The model addresses respirator selection, training and fit testing, cleaning, and proper use of the respirator.