



# General Settings

## Guidance for Identifying, Reporting, Preventing, and Controlling Respiratory Illness Outbreaks

These guidelines are intended to help settings other than schools, childcares, or healthcare facilities in respiratory illness outbreaks.

### Risk factors for severe illness

People at higher risk for severe illness or complications from respiratory viruses include older adults, young children, people with compromised immune systems, people with disabilities, and pregnant women.

### Monitoring and testing

Determining which type of respiratory illness (Influenza, COVID-19, RSV, or other) a person may have is difficult based on symptoms alone. Therefore, if multiple people are noted to have similar respiratory illness symptoms, testing is recommended to determine the cause of illness.

### What is a respiratory illness outbreak?

A respiratory illness outbreak is an unusual occurrence or increase in the number of people experiencing respiratory illness above what is normally expected within a specific location.

### When & what to report to public health

If your facility suspects an outbreak, report the number of ill individuals, symptoms, symptom onset, test results, affected areas, hospitalizations, deaths, and measures taken to stop spread of illness.

### How to report to public health

Contact your regional health department by phone as listed on the South Carolina List of Reportable Conditions which can be found on: <https://dph.sc.gov/sites/scdph/files/2024-04/CR-005869.pdf>.

## Outbreak control measures

### Core prevention strategies:

- Stay up to date with immunizations
- Practice good respiratory hygiene (i.e., cover your cough or sneeze and wash hands often)
- Stay away from others when sick
- Improve airflow and ventilation
- Clean high touch surfaces regularly

### Additional prevention strategies

- Masks
- Physical distancing
- Testing for respiratory viruses

## Correctional facilities and shelters

It is important to make sure populations in the care of these settings can protect themselves from respiratory illnesses through the prevention strategies listed above.

People experiencing homelessness should not be turned away from shelter and essential services when they have symptoms of respiratory illness.

## Resources

CDC Respiratory Virus Guidance: [cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/respiratory-virus-guidance.html](https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/respiratory-virus-guidance.html)

**This guidance is intended for a general audience and community settings, and does not apply to healthcare workers providing care in these settings.**