Good Hygiene Practices – Reducing the Spread of Infections and Viruses



What can I do to reduce the spread of “germs”?

The most important way to reduce the spread of infections is hand washing – frequently wash hands with soap and water, if unavailable use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol). Also important is to get a vaccine for those infections and viruses that have one, when available.

WHAT ARE GOOD PRACTICES TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF INFECTIONS?

Ways you can reduce or slow the spread of infections include:

- Get the appropriate vaccine.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Practice physical distancing from members outside your household, when appropriate (staying more than 2 metres (6 feet) apart).
- Stay home if you are sick (so you do not spread the illness to other people).
- Use a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your arm, not your hand and turn away from other people.
- Use single-use tissues. Dispose of the tissue immediately.
- Wash your hands after coughing, sneezing or using tissues.
- If working with children, have them play with hard surface toys that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands (viruses can enter your body from unwashed hands).
- Do not share cups, glasses, dishes, cutlery, cigarettes or cellphones.
- When recommended by public health authorities, wear a non-medical mask when in a public space and physical distancing cannot be maintained.

WHAT CAN A WORKPLACE DO?

Workplaces can help by having an infection control plan which includes:

- Providing clean hand washing facilities.
- Offering alcohol-based hand sanitizers with minimum 60% alcohol content, when regular facilities are not available (or to people on the road).

- When recommended by public health authorities, screening employees and visitors before they enter the building (i.e., using a questionnaire or other measures). Do not allow an individual into the building if they screen positive.
- Providing boxes of tissues and encourage their use.
- Providing disinfectant wipes, especially for use in common areas and at personal workstations.
- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces on a schedule, such as doorknobs, handles, stair railings, bars, desks, phones, kitchens, shared computers, cash registers, elevator buttons, and restaurants tables/menus. High touch items and surfaces should be disinfected multiple times a day.
- Reminding staff to not share cups, glasses, dishes, and cutlery. Be sure dishes are washed in soap and water before used by another person.
- Removing magazines and papers from waiting areas or common rooms (such as receptions, break rooms and kitchens).
- Disinfecting items such as pens at receptions and service desks between users.
- Cleaning and disinfecting a person's workstation (or other surfaces they came in contact with) when they suspect or confirm they have an infection.
- Making sure ventilation systems are working properly, are maintained according to manufacturers recommendation and are adjusted to provide the maximum air exchanges per hour.
- Washing hands after handling garbage.
- When handling of linen contaminated with secretions from persons thought to be or are sick, wash using detergent and dry items completely. Do not shake dirty laundry. Perform hand hygiene afterwards.
- Considering the creation of teams or crews ("cohorts") of workers that will work together exclusively to reduce the spread of the virus.
- Limiting visitors. Rescheduling or limiting appointments with suppliers, vendors, service technicians and others where possible.

WHEN CLEANING AND DISINFECTING, HOW SHOULD IT BE DONE?

Additional measures may be required to minimize transmission of germs by touch points (sinks, door and cupboard handles, railings, objects, counters, etc.).Viruses, for example, can remain viable on hard surfaces for several hours, depending on environmental conditions. The Regulators in the United States indicates that "Most studies have shown that the flu virus can live and potentially infect a person for up to 48 hours after being deposited on a surface."

In most workplaces and homes, cleaning floors, walls, doorknobs, etc. with disinfectants or bleach solution (5 millilitres (mL) of (5%) bleach per 250 mL of water is recommended. Use a disinfectant with a drug identification number (DIN). This number means that it has been approved for use in Canada.

Follow the directions on the cleaning or disinfecting products. Wear personal protective clothing, such as gloves and eye protection, where required. Know the appropriate procedures for general sanitation and infection control, and how to work safely with hazardous products, including bleach.

If using gloves when cleaning, always wear the appropriate type of glove for the product you are using. No one glove material is resistant to all chemicals. Some products dissolve certain glove materials and therefore will offer no protection

by allowing the product to contact your skin. This permeation can take place in a few seconds, while other products may take days or weeks.

Refer to the product's safety data sheet (SDS) for information on which glove material will provide the best protection (e.g., glove material will be listed, such as neoprene, butyl rubber, natural rubber, etc.). If this information is missing, contact the supplier or manufacturer of the product. Manufacturers of chemical protective gloves and clothing may also assist their customers in making the appropriate choices.

WHAT IS MEANT BY PHYSICAL DISTANCING?

Physical distancing is a strategy where you try to avoid crowded places, large gatherings of people or close contact with a group of people. For example, viruses can spread from person to person. In general, a distance of two metres (6 feet) will slow the spread of a virus, but more distance is more effective.

When physical distancing is recommended, steps to follow include:

- Use communication technologies including telephone, teleconferencing, online or cloud solutions to conduct as much business as possible (including within the same building).
- Allow employees to work from home, or to work flexible hours to avoid crowding the workplace.
- Increase the distance between desks or work stations.
- Increase the number of times touch points and surfaces are cleaned.
- Cancel or postpone any travel, meetings, workshops, etc. that are not absolutely necessary.
- Drive, walk, or cycle to work, but try to avoid public transit. Alternatively, workplaces can consider allowing staff to arrive early/late so they can use public transit when it is less crowded.
- Allow staff to eat at their desks or have staggered lunch hours to avoid crowded lunch rooms.
- Spend as little time as possible in break rooms or photocopy centres.
- When meetings are necessary, have the meeting in a larger room where people can sit with more space between them (at least two metres apart).
- Avoid shaking hands or hugging.

WHAT SHOULD A WORKPLACE DO IF AN EMPLOYEE BECOMES ILL AT WORK?

Generally, employees should be allowed and encouraged to stay at home if they are not feeling well. However, in the event of a pandemic, use of screening tools or a list of symptoms as determined by your local public health authority as a checklist may be appropriate. If employees are showing any symptoms, allow them to go or remain at home. If there is doubt if a person is sick, they should stay home until they feel well and are able to resume their regular activities. Your local public health authority may have specific guidance on return to work after illness.

For example, if a person becomes ill at work and COVID-19 is suspected, they should report to first aid or ask for medical attention. If the worker is acutely and severely ill (such as difficulty breath or chest pain) call 911 immediately and provide first aid. Otherwise, they should:

- put on a medical mask, if not available use a non-medical mask.

- wash or sanitize their hands, and isolate in a designated room until they are able to return to their home, avoiding public transit, if possible.
- contact their local public health authority or use a self-assessment tool for more information and instructions.

Clean and disinfect any surface or item that the ill worker was in contact with.

Source: © Copyright 1997-2021 CCOHS