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Proper Cleaning and Disinfecting of Surfaces for Non-Clinical Settings *July 2009*

Spread of the H1N1 influenza A virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Hand transfer of a virus to the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth resulting in infection is likely to occur. Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on a surface.

Hand hygiene, cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene are important means of interrupting transmission of influenza. Routine cleaning and disinfection practices play an important role in minimizing the spread of influenza.

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- **Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.**
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.**
- **Try to avoid close contact with sick people.**
- **If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.**

The following guidance may be followed to clean and disinfect hard surfaces and items in homes, schools and similar environments:

- Clean all areas and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact (like doorknobs, faucets, handrails) routinely (e.g., daily, before/after meals, as needed) and also immediately when visibly soiled; use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas; it is not necessary to conduct disinfection of environmental surfaces beyond routine cleaning.
- Follow label instructions carefully when using disinfectants and cleaners.
 - Pay attention to any hazard warnings and instructions on the labels for using personal protective items (such as household gloves).



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- Do not mix disinfectants and cleaners unless the labels indicate it is safe to do so. Combining certain products (such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners) can be harmful, resulting in serious injury or death.
- Routine cleaning with soap or detergent and water to remove soil and organic matter, followed by proper use of disinfectants to inactivate any remaining virus are basic components of effective environmental management of influenza. Reducing the number of influenza virus particles on a surface can reduce the chances of hand transfer of virus.
 - Keep hard surfaces like kitchen countertops, tabletops, desktops, and bathroom surfaces clean and disinfected.
 - Clean the surface with a commercial product that is both a detergent (cleans) and a disinfectant (kills germs). These products can be used when surfaces are not visibly dirty.
 - Another way to do this is to wash the surface with a general household cleaner (soap or detergent), rinse with water, and follow with a disinfectant. This method should be used for visibly dirty surfaces.
 - Use disinfectants on surfaces that are touched often. Clean the surface as explained above before using disinfectants.
 - If disinfectants are not available, use a chlorine bleach solution made by adding 1 tablespoon of bleach to a quart (4 cups) of water; use a cloth to apply this to surfaces and let stand for 3 – 5 minutes before rinsing with clean water. (For a larger supply of disinfectant, add ¼ cup of bleach to a gallon [16 cups] of water.) Note: bleach may damage or remove color from some surfaces or materials.
 - Wear gloves to protect your hands when working with strong bleach solutions.
- Floors and carpets should be regularly cleaned
 - Mop hard floor surfaces with a damp mop that has been soaked in disinfectant, rinsed and dried. A sweeping motion should be used to avoid splashes.
 - Vacuum carpets or rugs using a cleaner that does not throw dust into the air. They can be steam cleaned if soiled by bodily liquids. Rugs should not be hung and swatted as this will create aerosols.
- Keep surfaces touched by more than one person clean and disinfected. Examples of these surfaces include doorknobs, refrigerator door handles, and microwaves.
 - Clean with a combination detergent and disinfectant product. Or use a cleaner first, rinse the surface thoroughly, and then follow with a disinfectant.
 - Use sanitizer cloths to wipe electronic items that are touched often, such as phones, computers, remote controls, and hand-held games.
 - Use sanitizer cloths to wipe car door handles, the steering wheel, and the gear shift.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) and You*, http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/swineflu_you.htm, May 1, 2009
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *PandemicFlu.gov*, <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/panfacts.html>, May 1, 2009.