

Controlling Influenza in the Workplace

How Does Influenza Spread?



WOOD WYANT

Educational
Bulletin

Influenza

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This virus is spread primarily from one person to another via the airborne route of transmission. When a person with Influenza is coughing and sneezing they are expelling tiny droplets into the air which contain the virus. Most people who get Influenza are exposed to the virus by breathing in these tiny droplets expelled by sick people. The virus however can be spread onto environmental surfaces via these same droplets. If a healthy person touches a virus contaminated surface and then rubs their eyes or nose they are then potentially exposed to the virus. Some studies suggest the virus contaminated surfaces can still infect people 8 hours after initial contamination.



| What is the Best Way to Prevent the Spread of Influenza in the Workplace?

People with Influenza like Illness (ILI) symptoms should be encouraged via workplace policies to stay home. Even with workplace policies there still may be various reasons outside of your control that results in people with ILI symptoms in or visiting your workplace. Therefore everyone should be educated on the basics of Influenza control.

| Workplace Strategies to Control Influenza

Sneezing and Coughing Control

Facial tissue should be readily available throughout the workplace for employees to use for sneezing and coughing. When the need to sneeze or cough presents without the availability of facial tissue then employees should use the inner elbow to absorb the force and droplets of the cough or sneeze. Used facial tissue should be thrown in the trash and hand hygiene should be immediately performed afterwards.



Improved Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the number one way to protect our health from many illnesses including Influenza. In the case of Influenza this includes washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol based hand sanitizers. Ensure washrooms and break rooms with sinks are fully stocked and supplied with soap and paper towels. Hand sanitizer can also be made available throughout the workplace to provide frequent opportunity to reduce the risk our hands have picked up the virus.

Hand sanitizer placement should reflect areas of increased risk of sharing touch surfaces as well as common access points. These include but are not limited to areas such as building entrances, outside elevators, in break rooms or eating areas, public telephone locations, shared computer / photocopier resources, etc..



Correct Disinfectant Choice

Managers responsible for cleaning in a facility understand that their role is to keep surfaces looking clean and "germ safe". However when an illness like Influenza becomes a topic in the news, Managers start to question whether their current protocols and products meet the new challenge. Influenza is not new and can be a challenge every year to our Healthcare system but not to our disinfectant products. Influenza A is an enveloped RNA virus and is considered highly sensitive to disinfectants. The following quat based Wood Wyant disinfectants have an Influenza claim on their label: **1492, Everyday Disinfectant - ED, GenBact, Dyankil Plus, Dynakil SQ, Everyday Disinfectant - ED** and **GenBact** efficacy testing both show Influenza inactivation (>3.0 log reduction) with 2 minutes of contact time. **GenBact** unlike the other quats has a general virucidal claim since it has demonstrated efficacy on both enveloped and non-enveloped

viruses. **GenBact** provides "high level"¹ broad spectrum performance as an environmental hard surface disinfectant.

Employee Education

Unless building occupants are informed of the need for their participation in protecting their Health the benefits of any added measures will not be fully realized. Signs, posters and newsletters can be effective tools to help spread the word on how staff can change their behavior for the common good. These tools should help them understand Cough and Sneezing Control, Hand Hygiene and Personal Area Cleaning and the methods / products used for each element. It should also be used to explain the basics of prevention such as staying away from sick people (2m or 6 feet) and avoiding the touching of their eyes, nose or face with unwashed hands.

Increased Cleaning Frequency

As stated above Influenza is a very easy to kill virus and is also easily cleaned away from surfaces. However with the increased presence of the virus in daily activities the traditional once per day cleaning may not be enough to control the contamination of environmental surfaces. Cleaning services should be increased and focused upon frequent contact surfaces such as door knobs and handles, cart handles, conveyor belts, railings, elevator buttons, drinking fountains, tables and chairs, call bells, etc.

Cleaning services that are performed only after business hours may not be available for increased cleaning during the day. In these situations the use of pre-wetted towels for cleaning can be made available for employees. These employees can on their own initiative clean their own work environment and shared equipment / furniture they will be using for a prolonged period of time to protect themselves.

¹ "High Level" refers to a product's ability to kill various categories of organisms including vegetative bacteria, enveloped and non-enveloped viruses, fungi and TB. It does not refer to its use on particular surfaces such as semi-critical or critical devices.



| Why Implement These Measures?

Health Canada has indicated that as of January 22, 2011, overall influenza detections in Canada appear to have peaked except for BC and the Atlantic provinces. Influenza A (H3N2) since the beginning of the season has been the most prominent strain making up 89.5% of analyzed specimens.

In 2005-2006 Gojo Industries Inc. conducted a pilot study with the co-operation of FedEx Custom Critical in the United States to determine the effectiveness of implementing a **Purell®** alcohol hand sanitizer program. The study was focused upon on a white collar employment setting with approximately 500 employees and was conducted over 34 weeks. The end result of implementing the program was a measureable decrease in absenteeism due to illness of 21%.

The estimated payback for implementing this **Purell®** sanitizer and education program for this employer was less than 5 months. The employer also was able to realize a savings of 31 work days per 100 employees per year.



General References:

General Business and Workplace Guidance for the Prevention of Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Flu in Workers, May 30, 2009;
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/workplace.htm>

Evaluating Effects of an Alcohol Hand Sanitizer Program on Employee Absenteeism: Pilot Results, James W. Arbogast, Ph.D., Cristina Ferrazzano Yaussy, MPH, Todd Cartner,
http://workplace.gojo.com/resources/FedEx_study.asp

"Disinfection, Sterilization, and Preservation", 4th Ed., Seymour S. Block, Ph. D., Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia and London, 1991

FluWatch (Jan 22, 2001) - Public Health Agency of Canada; <http://origin.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/>

Purell® is a registered trademark of Johnson & Johnson

| Summary

The workplace is a significant arena where illness can be transmitted within our population. Controlling the spread of any seasonal illness such as Influenza is not only respecting the value of Employees but is a cost savings / productivity increase opportunity for the Employer as well. Below is a list of supplies that can be used to address various transmission elements in the control of Influenza:

- | Disinfectants: Everyday Disinfectant - ED, GenBact, 1492, Dyankil Plus, Dynakil SQ
- | Hand Sanitizer: Purell® Hand Sanitizer (available in wall dispenser, desktop and disposable wipe format)
- | Facial Tissue: Envirologic Facial Tissue
- | Ready to Use Wipes: Ultra Wipes
- | Workplace Awareness Materials: Posters can be downloaded from Wood Wyant by going to www.woodwyant.com and selecting the Wood Wyant tab and selecting the Workplace Wellness option on the left menu.



| About Louis Anastasakos

In 1990, upon receiving an honours degree in Chemistry from McMaster University in the previous year, Louis joined the Sanitation industry as a chemist. Louis was later promoted to the position of Lab Supervisor and then to Development Chemist for Institutional Products. In 1997, Louis joined Wood Wyant in the position of Technical Manager overseeing regulatory affairs, product quality management and product development at the Wyant Chemicals Division. In 2006 Louis shifted to a Marketing / Sales support role within Wood Wyant bringing his technical knowledge to the aid and support of Wood Wyant customers.

Today, as an Expert Sustainability Professional (ESP) of the CGSP program with CIMS I.C.E. - GB Accreditation and a member of the Industrial and Institutional Technical Forum (IITF) of the CSSA, Louis blends his technical background, his global understanding of products and processes and with his love for public speaking to ensure clients are well educated on developing the most efficient and beneficial programs.

