

HUMAN SWINE INFLUENZA IN THE WORKPLACE SETTING

In workplaces where client/customer service does not require hands on care

The current human swine flu is a new type of influenza strain, but it is suspected that it is spread the same way as previous strains of seasonal influenza: by breathing in infected droplets when you are close to someone sneezing or coughing, and by contact with something recently contaminated (shaking hands, for example).

This information sheet provides advice on prevention of influenza in occupational settings. Influenza is a viral respiratory illness that causes fever and cough with sore throat, headache, or muscle aches.

INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES:

(It is recommended your local Occupational Health Committee/Representative oversee the following)

HOW CAN INFLUENZA BE PREVENTED IN THE OCCUPATIONAL SETTINGS?

Hand hygiene:

- Wash hands after direct contact with individuals.
- Wash hands for 15 seconds using soap, friction and warm running water for 15 seconds. Hang posters of proper technique in appropriate areas. Visit the Saskatchewan Health website to download a poster.
- Ensure areas for hand washing are kept well supplied.
- If unable to wash hands immediately use an alcohol-based hand gel.

Cough and sneeze hygiene:

- Cover nose and mouth with tissue when sneezing and coughing
 - Use disposable one-use tissues.
 - If no tissue use sleeve or arm.
- Be sure to wash hands or use hand gel after coughing, sneezing or using tissues and encourage children to do the same.
- Influenza can spread from hand to eye and nose contact – avoid touching these areas.
- Wearing a mask is not a necessary measure at this time.
- The influenza vaccine available this season will not protect against Swine Flu.

WHAT KIND OF CLEANING CAN HELP PREVENT INFLUENZA?

Viruses can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours. Develop a facility routine for cleaning surfaces:

- Hard surfaces that are touched frequently should be cleansed at least daily and when obviously soiled using an approved disinfecting solution as per manufacturers instructions.
 - Approved disinfecting solutions include: household bleach; NaDCC (Sodium dichloroisocyanurate); or, Chloramine-T powder with 25% available chlorine.
- Ensure gloves and protective clothing to avoid exposing body or clothing while cleaning.
- There is no special handling requirement for soiled laundry.
- Handle all waste materials with usual precautions. Line or double line waste baskets and dispose daily.

HOW SHOULD A WORKPLACE RESPOND TO STAFF OR CLIENTS WITH INFLUENZA LIKE SYMPTOMS?

- As is necessary with any respiratory illness, staff that develop a fever and cough should be requested to stay home until symptoms resolve. If the employee is ill enough, a personal health care provider should evaluate.
- Distance provides protection, so keeping some distance between staff and a coughing client and turning away while the client is coughing will decrease the risk of transmission.

WHEN SHOULD A WORKPLACE SETTING NOTIFY PUBLIC HEALTH?

When there is an unusual number of sick staff.

ARE WORKPLACE SETTINGS TO BE CLOSED?

There is no recommendation to close workplaces in Saskatchewan. As more information about risk and transmission patterns is available that decision will be reassessed.