

Protecting Yourself During an Infectious Disease Outbreak

Infectious disease outbreaks can be caused by a variety of agents, including influenza and coronaviruses. During a large-scale outbreak, such as a pandemic, transmission can be anticipated not just in healthcare settings, but among co-workers and between members of the general public and workers in other types of workplaces. This handout provides simple guidance on how workers in non-healthcare settings can protect themselves and others from infection. Prevention involves three basic strategies - cough etiquette, hand washing, and social distancing.

Cough Etiquette

When you sneeze or cough, virus-containing droplets can be expelled into the air exposing others who are nearby. In addition, surfaces near the cough or sneeze can become contaminated as well. To avoid the spread of germs from a cough or sneeze, follow these procedures:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- After use, put the tissue in the nearest waste basket
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands

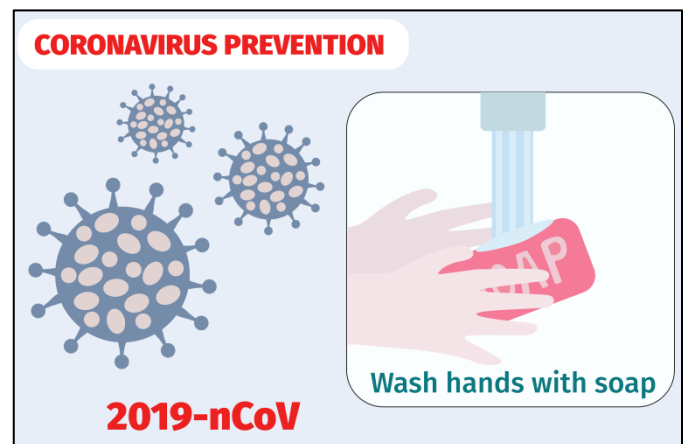
Hand Washing

Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps to take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Germs are spread by touching your face after touching contaminated objects, and touching objects after contaminating your hands. Washing hands with soap and water is easy, and it is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations.

When

Wash your hands frequently throughout the day:

- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage
- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- Before and after treating a cut or wound



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands!

How

- Follow these five steps:
 - Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap
 - Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails
 - Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. If you don't have a timer, hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice
 - Rinse your hands well under clean, running water
 - Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them

When Soap and Water are not Available

If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label. Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However, sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs, they may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy, and they might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.

Follow these steps when using hand sanitizers:

- Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount)
- Rub your hands together
- Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds

Social Distancing

Social distancing helps prevent the spread of respiratory disease by avoiding close contact with people who are or may be sick. Follow these procedures:

- Stay home when sick so you do not spread your germs to others
- Avoid close contact with others. Maintain a distance of six feet (1.8 m) or more when possible
- Limit larger social gatherings



- Avoid shaking hands. Use alternative greetings such as waving, nods, or other gestures
- Avoid using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible

Other Steps to Take

Be sure to obtain flu, pneumonia, and other vaccinations recommended by your physician. These vaccinations can help to minimize:

- Your chances of becoming infected
- The severity of the illness and complications if you do become infected
- Your ability to infect others

Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces helps to prevent the spread of germs. Contact your supervisor for additional information on the procedures that are used in your workplace.

Be sure to follow health alerts issued by your local public health department as well as those from the World Health Organization (WHO), which can be accessed at www.who.int.

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