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Health Department

FACTS & details

about Sedgwick County Government

Novel H1N1 Influenza (Flu) -

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Can the Novel H1N1 flu virus spread through touching surfaces?

Yes, the virus can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with the virus and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth before washing his or her hands.

Examples include doorknobs, desks, countertops, and phones.

How long can the virus survive on surfaces?

Studies show the flu virus can survive on hard surfaces and can infect a person for two to eight hours.

What types of disinfectants can be used to prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu?

To prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus, it is important to keep surfaces clean by cleaning them with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label. Currently, more than 500 disinfectants are registered for use on hard, non-porous surfaces against Influenza A viruses (i.e. Clorox, Lysol, and Pine Sol products). These products are widely available and can be purchased at drugstores, supermarkets, and home maintenance stores. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) believes, based on available scientific information, that products with a label that states that it is effective against "Influenza A virus" will be effective against the H1N1 flu virus.

When choosing a disinfectant be sure the label lists your specific site of concern (i.e. offices, hospitals, schools, or homes). For safe and effective use, always follow label instructions, paying special attention to the product's dilution rate (if applicable) and contact time. For a list of effective cleaning products, visit www.epa.gov.

What items should be frequently cleaned to prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu virus?

- Handles in the bathroom
- Toys
- Door knobs
- Light switches
- Telephones
- Refrigerator handles

Use disinfectant wipes for frequently touched electronic items like a computer mouse, keyboard, and remote controls.

How should potentially H1N1-contaminated waste be disposed of to prevent the spread of the flu virus?

To prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu virus, it is recommended that tissues and other disposable items used by an infected person be thrown in the trash. After touching used tissues and similar waste, individuals should wash their hands with soap and water.

How should potentially H1N1-contaminated linens, eating utensils and dishes be handled?

These items do not need to be cleaned separately. They should not be shared without washing thoroughly first. Linens (such as bed sheets and towels) should be washed with household laundry soap and dried on a hot setting. Individuals should avoid "hugging" laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating themselves. Individuals should wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub immediately after handling dirty laundry. Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with hot water and soap.

Can the H1N1 flu be spread through water in swimming pools, spas, or other recreational venues?

Flu viruses infect the upper respiratory tract. There has never been a documented case of flu virus infection associated with water exposure. Recent studies have demonstrated that chlorine levels recommended by the CDC (1–3 parts per million [ppm or mg/L] for pools and 2–5 ppm for spas) are adequate to disinfect against other Influenza A viruses. It is likely that H1N1 would therefore also be similarly disinfected by chlorine.

How can I get more information?

For more information on H1N1, call the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-5558 or e-mail flu@sedgwick.gov.