



FLU? | NOT ON MY WATCH.*

Guidelines for Preventing Influenza

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Influenza in the Healthcare Setting

As a healthcare professional, you are on the frontline in the battle to prevent unnecessary illness and death from seasonal and pandemic influenzas. Even in a non-epidemic year, millions of men, women and children, especially the very young and old, contract the flu and hundreds of thousands die from this highly contagious respiratory infection. Hospitalized patients are especially susceptible to infection. At Kimberly-Clark, we share your concerns about influenza and are as passionate as you are about preventing the spread of flu in the healthcare environment.

Seasonal and Pandemic Influenza

World wide each year, there are:

- Up to 500 million people infected with influenza¹
- 3–5 million cases of severe influenza²
- Up to 500,000 deaths from influenza²

Annually within the U.S., in a non-epidemic year, approximately 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 people die from influenza-related causes. Pneumonia is the leading cause of influenza-related death.³ More than 90% of deaths are attributed to pneumonia and influenza occur in older persons (≥ 65 years).³ However, even otherwise healthy people are at risk; approximately 20% of those who die from influenza during epidemics are previously healthy.⁴

Preventing the Spread of Influenza in the Healthcare Setting

Influenza is primarily transmitted from person to person via large virus-laden droplets that are generated when infected persons cough or sneeze; these large droplets can then settle on the mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tracts of susceptible persons who are near (e.g., within about 6 feet) infected persons. Transmission may also occur through direct contact or indirect contact with respiratory secretions, such as touching surfaces contaminated with influenza virus and then touching the eyes, nose or mouth. Adults may be able to spread influenza to others from 1 day before getting symptoms to approximately 5 days after symptoms start. Young children and persons with weakened immune systems may be infectious for 10 or more days after onset of symptoms.⁵

Prevention and Control Measures

- Annual influenza vaccination of patients and healthcare personnel
- Implementation of patient screening protocols at all points of healthcare system entry for influenza-like illness (ILI)⁵

Restriction of ill Visitors and Personnel from Entering the Facility

- Administration of influenza antiviral medications for prophylaxis and treatment when influenza is detected in the facility
- Other prevention strategies, such as respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette programs⁶

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Infection Control Measures for Preventing and Controlling Influenza Transmission in Long-Term Care Facilities. November 15, 2007. www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/longtermcare.htm Accessed: 12/04/2009.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette in Healthcare Settings. www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm Accessed: 12/04/2009.

(Continued)



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Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette Measures

Post visual alerts in appropriate languages as well as essential materials (e.g., tissues, masks, alcohol hand rub, no-touch receptacles) in waiting areas, outpatient units, etc. to remind patients, visitors and staff to:

- **Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.**
- **Dispose of the used tissue in the nearest waste receptacle.**
- **Clean hands with soap and water, an alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic handwash after touching respiratory secretions or handling contaminated objects.**
- **Provide a mask to those who are coughing.**
- **If possible, designate an area in the waiting rooms for patients with respiratory symptoms.⁶**

1 Ghendon Y. Influenza – its impact and control. *World Health Stat Q* 1992; [2-3]: 306-11.

2 World Health Organization. Influenza. Fact sheet no. 211, March 2003.

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC says “take 3” steps to fight the flu. CS 08-121686. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery/index.htm> Accessed: December 11, 2008.

4 Glezen WP, Payne AA, Snyder DN, Downs TD. Mortality and influenza. *J Infect Dis* 1982; 146: 313-21.

5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Infection Control Measures for Preventing and Controlling Influenza Transmission in Long-Term Care Facilities. November 15, 2007. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/longtermcare.htm> Accessed: 12/04/2009.

6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette in Healthcare Settings. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm> Accessed: 12/04/2009.