

F a c t s

INFLUENZA—SANITIZING SURFACES AT HOME AND WORK

The influenza virus survives well in the environment. People who are ill with influenza can contaminate the environment with their respiratory secretions. Cleaning the environment you live and work in is an important way to prevent influenza transmission and stay healthy.

The influenza virus can survive on:

- hard porous surfaces for up to 2 days
- cloth, paper and tissues for 8 to 12 hours
- hands for 5 minutes

How and when should I wash my hands?

- Wash your hands regularly especially after contact with the ill person, before and after going to the washroom, before preparing and eating food, or touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Soap, hand wash or hand hygiene products can readily inactivate the influenza virus. Antibacterial and antiseptic soap in a home setting is not required.
- Using regular soap along with proper hand washing procedures will both stop the spread and help keep people healthy. The most important part of hand washing is the physical scrubbing action.
- It is important that the ill person wash their hands regularly especially after coughing or sneezing, even into a tissue. The force of sneezing into a tissue can still allow the virus to pass through the tissue onto the hands, which can then spread the virus onto surfaces that others touch, allowing them to pick up the virus.

— *Health & Environment Facts* —

How and when should I clean surfaces?

- To help prevent your family from getting ill, surfaces should be sanitized on a regular basis, especially those contaminated with secretions from persons with influenza.
- Sanitize common hand-contact surfaces, such as door knobs, phone receivers, bathroom fixtures, and hand rails. It is best to clean on a daily basis.
- Remember: cleaning and sanitizing are different.
 - Cleaning refers to the removal of visible dirt, soil and debris.
 - Sanitizing refers to killing and removing 99.9% of illness-causing germs when used properly. It removes what you cannot see with the naked eye; however, a sanitized surface is not necessarily sterile. There still may be some germs present. For best results, clean the surface first prior to sanitizing.

How do I sanitize?

Use a 1:100 unscented household bleach solution as a sanitizer. Prepare the solution in the following manner:

1. 50 mL (1/4 cup) of bleach + 4950 mL (20 cups) of water
2. 5 mL (1 tsp) of bleach + 495 mL (2 cups) of water

Spray or wipe the solution onto the surface and let it air dry. If you want to rinse the surface after it is sanitized, wait for the bleach to sit on the surface for at least 45 seconds after application so it will have sufficient contact time to kill the germs. Bleach kills a variety of bacteria and viruses; however, substitutes, such as vinegar, lemon juice or cleaning solutions that do not contain bleach, are not as effective. Following these household cleaning tips can help stop the spread of infection.

Where can I go for more information?

The following web sites provide information on influenza. You may also contact Public Health at 376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456 for more information.

- Health Canada's Flu Information: www.healthcanada.ca/flu
- Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care: www.healthyontario.com

Grey Bruce Health Unit for information on hand washing, influenza and public health support:
www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca