



Date: December 18, 2014

To: ISSA Members

Subject: ISSA Fact Sheet on Infection Prevention for Cold and Flu Season

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### Common Colds and Influenza

#### **About Influenza (Flu)**

Influenza, often called the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by different strains of the influenza virus. The flu causes mild to severe illness, with an estimated 3 to 5 million cases and 250,000 to 500,000 deaths worldwide each year.

#### **About Influenza A**

The Influenza A (H3N2) is a virus with common flu symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, fatigue, and possible vomiting or diarrhea. While some strains of this virus are addressed within the current U.S. vaccine, 58% of cases found in hospitals to date have been attributed to strains that have drifted from those covered by the vaccine. Therefore, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control have warned that vaccine effectiveness could be lowered when in contact with these altered strains.

#### **About Common Colds**

Arguably the most prevalent illness in humans, the common cold is an infection by one of more than 200 viruses causing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, a sore throat, and runny nose.

#### **Spread of the Flu and Common Colds**

Both the flu and common cold are primarily spread through large droplets produced when infected people cough, sneeze, or talk. The infectious droplets settle on nearby surfaces or objects. The viruses are transmitted when others touch these objects and transfer the infectious agents from their hands to the eyes, nose or mouth. Cleaning is important because viruses spread easily via these "high touch" surfaces.

#### **Cleaning Best Practices**

The following cleaning and disinfection practices are recommended to help prevent the spread of influenza and cold viruses, and are largely based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations which can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm>. While these CDC recommendations are targeted to schools, they are generally appropriate for institutional facilities.

1. **Just Clean.** Routine cleaning plays a critical role in reducing the spread of flu and colds. It is the first step in disinfecting a surface, which actually kills the remaining germs.
2. **Clean and Disinfect Frequently Touched Surfaces.** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, and faucet handles on a daily basis. Frequency should be increased when there is a known outbreak.
3. **Simply Do Routine Cleaning and Disinfecting.** Most studies have shown the flu virus can live and potentially infect a person for only two to eight hours after being deposited on a surface. Therefore,

it is not necessary to close facilities to clean or disinfect every surface in the building to slow the spread of flu. Flu and cold viruses are relatively fragile, so standard or routine cleaning and disinfecting practices are sufficient to remove or kill them.

4. **Clean and Disinfect Correctly.** Always follow label directions on cleaning products and disinfectants. First clean surfaces with a general purpose cleaner to remove germs, and follow with an EPA-registered disinfectant to kill germs. Be sure to follow the label directions on the disinfectant for dwell time—the amount of time necessary for the disinfectant to reside on the surface in order to effectively kill germs. Please be sure the surface remains wet during the dwell time to properly disinfect. To save time, select disinfectants with shorter dwell times compared to other competing products.
  - When disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, select EPA-registered products with label claims indicating it kills cold and flu viruses.
  - If a surface is not visibly dirty, clean it with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes soil and germs) and disinfects (kills germs) instead. Read label directions carefully as there may be separate procedures for using products as cleaners versus disinfectants.
  - Use disinfecting wipes on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones and computers. Pay attention to the directions for using disinfecting wipes. It may be necessary to use more than one wipe to keep the surface wet for the stated length of contact time. Make sure electronics can withstand the use of liquids for cleaning and disinfecting.
  
5. **Use Products Safely.** Pay attention to hazard warnings and directions on product labels and SDSs. Cleaning products and disinfectants may call for the use of gloves or eye protection. Do not mix cleaners and disinfectants unless the labels indicate it is safe to do so. Combining certain products (such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners) can result in serious injury or death. Ensure custodial staff and others who use cleaners and disinfectants read and understand all instruction labels and implement safe, appropriate use. This might require providing instructional materials and training in other languages.

### **Flu Vaccine Effectiveness**

Given the potential ineffectiveness concerning these deviated strains of Influenza A, customers or employees may wonder if vaccine's are not effective at all. The answer is that they still can be useful in protecting against other flu viruses included in the formulation. So while it isn't effective against one strain, it can be effective against another.

This should not dissuade people from receiving vaccinations. They simply need to take extra precautions if cases involving Influenza A start to rise. Given that employees will be cleaning in areas that could contain viruses on surfaces, it is wise for them to consider common health precautions such as vaccines to ensure greater levels of personal protection

Please visit the ISSA website at [www.issa.com/education/cleaning-for-infection-prevention](http://www.issa.com/education/cleaning-for-infection-prevention) for additional information and programs to help you effectively clean and disinfect to prevent the spread of flu and cold viruses.