



Cold and Flu Season is Here: Spread the Word, Not the Germs

Megan J. DiGiorgio, MSN, RN, CIC, FAPIC

Did you know that influenza (flu) is ranked among the top 10 leading causes of death in Canada?¹ More than 12,200 people are hospitalized for flu-related complications, and about 3,500 people in Canada die each year from the flu.² Right now in Canada, influenza activity is reaching seasonal levels with many regions reporting increasing influenza activity. To complicate matters, common cold viruses widely circulate during flu season, with the average adult getting two to four colds per year mostly between September and May.

Because these two different types of viral respiratory illnesses have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to distinguish between them based on symptoms alone. As a rule of thumb, though, flu symptoms are more severe. Typical flu symptoms include fever (sometimes lasting for 3 or 4 days), chills, cough, sore throat, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue.³ The cold can cause similar symptoms that are typically less severe, and the cold does not usually result in serious complications such as pneumonia, bacterial infections or hospitalizations. In some cases, diagnostic testing may need to be done in order to determine whether a person has a cold or the flu.

Regardless of whether the culprit is the cold or the flu, the old adage applies: an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. **Here are some general infection prevention and control principles that every person should follow in order to stay healthy during cold and flu season.**

- 1. Get your flu vaccine and vaccinate your patients.** This is the most important measure you can take. Remember, you can't get the flu from the flu vaccine because it's either made with inactivated virus, no virus at all, or a weakened virus that cannot cause illness. It's important for healthcare workers to be aware of new guidance for the 2016-2017 flu season and use every opportunity to vaccinate people at risk.
- 2. Early detection is key.** If a patient in a healthcare facility is suspected to have flu, it's important to test, isolate and in some cases, provide antiviral therapy.
- 3. Perform hand hygiene often.** This is one of the most important measures we take to stay healthy all year long. Hand hygiene includes either handwashing or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- 4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.** Microorganisms from your hands can enter your body through your eyes, nose and mouth. It's been estimated that a person touches his or her nose more than 200 times per day! Make a conscious effort to avoid doing so.
- 5. Cover your cough or sneeze.** Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or into a tissue and perform hand hygiene immediately after.
- 6. Stay home if you are sick, and limit contact with others** as much as possible. A good rule of thumb is to stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. Healthcare worker presenteeism (coming to work sick) is harmful to patients and co-workers. Do no harm. Stay home.
- 7. Clean and disinfect surfaces often.** Contaminated surfaces play an important role in transmission of pathogens. Studies have shown that human influenza viruses generally can survive on surfaces between 2 and 8 hours.⁴ Since we frequently touch surfaces with our hands, cleaning surfaces can help prevent our hands from becoming contaminated with viruses and other pathogens.

1. Statistics Canada. The 10 leading causes of death, 2011 Ottawa, Canada2014 [Accessed 2015 July]. Available from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-625-x/2014001/article/11896-eng.htm>.
 2. Government of Canada. Flu facts: for health professionals. <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/flu-grippe/professionnels-professionnels-eng.php#6>. Updated September 23, 2016. Accessed December 7, 2016.
 3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Flu symptoms and complications. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/complications.htm>. Updated May 23, 2016. Accessed December 7, 2016.
 4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Preventing seasonal flu illness. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/preventing.htm>. Updated August 11, 2016. Accessed December 7, 2016.

THAT'S a FACT!

The best way to protect yourself and others against influenza is to wash hands correctly or use an alcohol-based hand rub!

Health Canada. The Benefits of Hand Washing. It's Your Health. <http://hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/hands-mains-eng.php> (Accessed 12/7/16)

Product Feature

EASY ACCESS TO WELL-BEING SOLUTIONS TO HELP REDUCE THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Studies have shown that accessibility to hand hygiene has directly impacted healthcare worker (HCW) compliance with hand hygiene guidelines. To help facilities maximize the availability of hand sanitizing products for HCWs, patients and visitors to help stop the spread of germs, GOJO offers a number of options including The Visitor Wellness Centre which is a perfect fit during the cold and flu season. Providing the right products and delivery system and easy access to hand hygiene and skin care products is essential to improving hand hygiene practices.

VISITOR WELLNESS CENTRE

A community outreach solution specifically designed to place in high traffic areas to provide visitors convenience access to hand hygiene and to demonstrate the hospital's commitment to community well-being and the fight against germs.

The centre consists of:

- 1) **Awareness-building signage** to educate about the importance of covering a cough or sneeze and hand hygiene
- 2) **Portable floor stand with brackets** for masks and tissues to make hand hygiene easy and convenient
- 3) **A touch free dispenser** with PURELL Advanced Hand Rub. The PURELL® brand is recognized by more people than any other brand of instant hand sanitizer. By making the PURELL brand visible, you send a clear message to employees, regulators, patients and visitors that hand hygiene and infection control is important to your facility and provides the peace of mind knowing they're using the most effective hand sanitizer in the industry.



TOUCH-FREE DISPENSING SYSTEMS

The GOJO LTX™ Touch Free Dispensing Systems help drive compliance by eliminating the need for manual dispensing. This removes the HCWs' concern about touching contaminated surfaces as they are trying to be compliant with hand hygiene guidelines. Touch free dispensing is proven to improve compliance by as much as 20.8%.¹



AWARENESS BUILDING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Our programs and training tools raise awareness of the importance of proper hand hygiene and modify behavior. Download complimentary materials at www.GOJOCanada.ca/education.

POINT OF CARE ACCESS

To help healthcare facilities improve accessibility and maximize the availability of hand sanitizing products for healthcare workers at the point of patient care, GOJO has designed a number of flexible hand hygiene dispensing solutions that help improve compliance and support fire code regulations. For areas in a facility that encounter fire code challenges, the PURELL VERSAHOLD™ Point of Care Bracket provides hand hygiene products on a variety of fixtures and surfaces to maximize placement and is compatible with the general workflow of healthcare workers.



Description	Order Number	Case Pack
VISITOR WELLNESS CENTER*		
Stand		
PURELL® LTX™ Floor Stand	2424-DS	1
PURELL Table Top Stand	2426-DS	1
PURELL Universal Mount Stand	2427-DS	1
Accessories		
Mask Bracket	2428-MB	1
Tissue Bracket	2429-TB	1
LTX SHIELD™ Floor & Wall Protector	2760-06	6
Dispenser		
PURELL LTX Touch Free Dispenser	1920-04	4
Refills		
PURELL Advanced Foam Hand Rub	1904-02-CAN00	2
PURELL Advanced Foam Moisturizing Foam Hand Rub	1913-02-CAN00	2
PURELL Advanced Hand Rub (Gel)	1903-02-CAN00	2
Signage		
Help Prevent Illness	HCE-LIT-VWCCN	1
HEALTHY HANDS START HERE™	PUR-DECAL-CANEF	1

*All parts sold separately.

BETTER HAND HYGIENE. FEWER INFECTIONS. GOJO MAKES IT EASY.

Learn more

PURELL.com cold and flu season
<https://www.purell.com/cold-flu-season>

Hand Hygiene Hub
<http://www.gojo.com/en/Corporate-Hand-Hygiene-Hub/Hand-Hygiene-Tools-And-Downloads>