



## For Immediate Release

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### ***Cleaning to Reduce the Risk of H1N1 Flu Virus Guidelines for Cleaning, Janitorial and Maintenance Staff***

*These guidelines were produced by CIRI in collaboration with the Simmons Center for Hygiene and Health in Home and Community,*

Swine flu is a new variant of the H1N1 strain of influenza type A. It is highly contagious and spreads from person-to-person in several ways: when an ill person sneezes or coughs infected droplets enter another person through the nose, mouth or eyes; or the droplets can land on a contact surface (e.g., a doorknob) that is touched by another who then touches their face.<sup>1</sup> Because swine flu is a new variant virus, most people do not have immunity and may become ill or die. A new H1N1 flu vaccine is being tested and should be available in fall 2009, although the initial supply may be limited for the general population.

*The following guidelines were prepared specifically for cleaning, janitorial and maintenance staff. They address:*

- Measures to reduce the risk of infection for cleaning personnel
- Routine cleaning procedures to reduce the risk of transmission during flu season or for any high-risk community
- Additional cleaning procedures during an H1N1 flu outbreak

#### **Measures to reduce the risk of infection for cleaning personnel**

Adults inflicted with the H1N1 virus can infect others one day before developing symptoms and for up to one week after becoming sick. Children can be contagious for several weeks.<sup>1</sup> The H1N1 symptoms are similar to other flu illnesses. Therefore, cleaning personnel should take the following steps to reduce their risk of infection during an H1N1 outbreak and other influenza strains during the regular flu season:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water using proper hand washing techniques.\* If soap and water are not available use a hand sanitizer containing at least 62% alcohol.
- Treat hands as potentially contaminated and avoid touching the nose and eyes.
- Sneeze or cough into a disposable tissue and discard it in a wastebasket immediately.
- If you contract the flu stay home and away from others for at least 7 days if possible and until you have no fever for 48 hours.<sup>1</sup>

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## **Effective and routine cleaning procedures to reduce the risk of transmission during flu season or for any high-risk community.**

Effective cleaning emphasizes maximum physical removal of unwanted contaminants and pollutants using an appropriate cleaning agent and application method. When done frequently the risk of transmitting infectious agents is reduced considerably. Flu viruses, including H1N1, can survive 8-12 hours on paper or cloth, 24-48 hours on nonporous surfaces, like doorknobs or desks, and up to 72 hours on wet surfaces.<sup>2</sup> This means they can remain contagious overnight in an improperly cleaned office or school. The cleaning procedure may employ various cleaning and disinfecting agents. Remember merely applying a disinfectant is not a substitute for cleaning. In that regard, consider the following:

- If using EPA registered disinfectants or cleaning/disinfectant products with *demonstrated (proven) virucidal* claims against flu viruses, check the manufacturer's instructions on "spectrum of action" and method of use (dilution, contact time, etc.). If using a product labeled only for use as a disinfectant, remember that federal law requires those surfaces being treated to be cleaned first.
- While bleach often is used alone, it does not clean, is highly corrosive to metals and is hazardous to skin, mucus membranes and the respiratory system. When using household bleach an effective solution requires 1 part bleach for 10 parts water. Some bleach or other cleaning products (e.g., spray form) may not require dilution and can be used "neat." Regardless, always check the product's label for use-dilution instructions and cautions.<sup>1</sup>
- Launder or replace potentially contaminated cleaning cloths and sponges between cleanings.
- Wear appropriate protective equipment that includes gloves and splash protection<sup>2</sup> (a face mask to prevent droplets containing flu virus from entering the eyes, nose or mouth while cleaning).
- Clean surfaces that are touched by the hands thoroughly:
  - Doorknobs, light switches, elevator buttons, remote controls, handrails
  - Computer keyboards and mice, telephones, microphones
  - Cafeteria tables and chairs, coffeemakers, vending machines
- Supply break rooms with dishwashing detergent and paper towels; clean and replace sponges often.
- Renew bathroom supplies frequently: soap, paper towels, effective waterless hand sanitizer and posters demonstrating proper hand washing procedures. Repair non-functioning air dryers immediately.

## **Additional cleaning procedures during an H1N1 community outbreak or confirmed cases in your building(s).**

The H1N1 flu virus is killed effectively by bleach-based products or EPA-registered disinfectants or cleaning/disinfectant products with *demonstrated (proven) virucidal* claims against flu viruses and effective cleaning protocols as previously described.

During an H1N1 flu outbreak, however, these additional cleaning procedures are advisable:

- Touch points in high traffic rooms and common areas (e.g., door handles for a main entrance) should be disinfected at least 3 times daily.<sup>2</sup>
- Disinfectant "bombs" that emit a dry disinfectant meant to cover all surfaces in an enclosed room are recommended for certain crowded facilities, such as schools.<sup>2</sup>
- Consider supplying individual offices and classrooms with disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers.

- Remove all reusable utensils, plates, cups, sponges and towels from break rooms and cafeterias. Replace with disposable goods.<sup>2</sup>
- Every cleaning service should have a planned cleaning procedure to use in an H1N1 flu pandemic, and a contingency plan should the janitorial staff become ill and unable to work.

For regular swine flu updates visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

\*Information on correct hand washing techniques is available by visiting <http://www.simmons.edu/hygieneandhealth/proper%20handwashing%20brochure.pdf>.

<sup>1</sup>Swine Flu: Preventing Spread in the Home and Community, International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene, April 2009.

<sup>2</sup>H1N1 Fact Sheet for Cleaning Professionals, CleanLink.com.