

Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection for Influenza
For Foster Care

Influenza is caused by a virus that, in the right conditions, can live for several hours on surfaces and items in child care (depending on the room temperature, humidity, exposure to sunlight, etc.). The spread of flu can be caused by an ill person coughing or sneezing near another person, or less commonly from touching a contaminated surface with your hand and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Thus, it is important to routinely clean and disinfect environmental surfaces that are commonly touched (such as doorknobs and stair rails).

Body Fluids Spread Sickness.

Influenza viruses live in body fluids like saliva, nasal fluid, and possibly vomit or feces. Environmental surfaces and items like toys can become covered with germs from sick children and spread to other children.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Helps Prevent Spread of Sickness

1. If the surfaces are visibly dirty, cleaning with any regular household-cleaning soap or detergent and water is the first step. (Please read and follow instructions on the cleaning product label.) Cleaning removes dirt and body fluids from surfaces and items. A surface or item should be clean before it is disinfected. Any regular household-cleaning soap or detergent may be used.
2. Disinfecting surfaces and items is the second step. Disinfecting surfaces and items will kill the influenza virus.

Choosing a Disinfecting Product

Influenza viruses can be killed by the using a solution of regular household bleach and water. Measure ¼ cup of household bleach (5.25% concentration) into one gallon of cool water. Apply the bleach solution to surfaces and items. Leave surfaces and items WET for 2 full minutes and allow to air dry.

Additional guidelines for using bleach

- Regular household bleach is commonly sold in a 5.25% concentration. Read the label to be sure.
- Bleach solution gets weaker as it sits after being made. Keep the bleach solution in a closed container away from sunlight during the day that you are planning to use it. The next day make a new batch of the bleach solution. Keep the bleach solution out of reach of children at all times.
- DO NOT mix bleach with any other cleaning products. This is extremely hazardous and may result in poisonous gas being created!
- Make and use the bleach solution in well ventilated area.
- Do not spray or use the bleach solution when children are present in the area.

General Cleaning/Disinfecting Guidance

- Do not spray (fog) rooms with disinfectant or air sanitizers. This is a dangerous practice that has no proven disease control benefit.
- Do not clean using dry dusting or sweeping methods. This practice will move germs into the air.
- Use damp cleaning methods like wet paper towels or mops for cleaning floors, window sills, countertops, and shelves.
- Clean frequently touched items like door knobs, telephones, equipment knobs or buttons, faucet handles, toilet handles, etc.
- Change mop heads, and similar items frequently during the cleaning process.
- Use disposable cleaning items. Work from lighter to heavier soiled areas.

- Use the double bucket method to clean then disinfect. First use a bucket of soap or detergent and water solution. Second, use the bleach and water solution.
- Clean, disinfect, and then air dry all non-disposable equipment (like mops) after each use.
- Items that are dishwasher safe may be cleaned then disinfected in the dishwasher using high water temperatures and drying cycles.

Specific Cleaning/Disinfecting Guidance

Commonly Touched Surfaces – Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces is important and will reduce spread of germs. Clean items like computer keyboards and handheld electronics according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

Commonly touched surfaces include but are not limited to:

- Door knobs or handles
- Faucets and toilet handles
- Hand rails
- Remote controls / hand-held electronics
- Shared computer equipment
- Shared counters or desks
- Telephones
- Toys

Dishes and Eating Utensils Effective cleaning and disinfecting of dishes and silverware is done by using a dishwasher and dishwasher detergent as recommended by the manufacturer’s instructions. Use high water and drying temperatures as items will tolerate. The 3-sink method (soap, rinse, disinfectant) to hand-wash dishes and utensils is allowed. Let hand-washed items air dry (do not wipe dry with towels). Discard disposable eating and serving items in a foot controlled and covered waste can. Frequently remove waste from the building.

Linens and Laundry Clothing, bedding, and towels should not be shaken or otherwise handled in a manner that will move germs into the air. Laundry may be washed in a standard washing machine using warm water and detergent. Bleach may be added as fabric and colors tolerate. Consider wearing disposable gloves when handling laundry and always wash your hands after handling dirty laundry.

Carpeting and Cloth Furnishings Carpeting that is soiled with body fluids should be cleaned using the manufacturer’s instructions or vacuum using a HEPA filter followed by carpet cleaning using a wet vacuuming method.

Toys Cloth or other non-washable toys and play items should be temporarily stored during a disease outbreak. Washable toys and play items may be laundered or disinfected with soap and water then dipped in bleach water solution and allowed to air dry. Do not wipe toys dry with a towel. Some toys may be dishwasher safe.

Cleaning Frequency Visibly soiled areas should be cleaned immediately. Commonly used surfaces (like tables, chairs, diaper changing stations, and countertops) should be cleaned and sanitized after each use. Other areas and items known or likely to be soiled should be disinfected at least daily.

For more information on influenza visit the Iowa Department of Public Health website at:

www.idph.state.ia.us