

Influenza Fact Sheet

Seasonal influenza, a respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses, is a significant cause of morbidity and mortality, especially in individuals who are at the extremes of age, pregnant, immunocompromised, or have chronic underlying conditions.

General Information

What is Influenza?

Influenza, or flu, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by RNA viruses of the family Orthomyxoviridae (the influenza viruses), which affect birds and mammals. There are three main types of influenza viruses that can infect humans - types A, B and C. Type A influenza viruses are further divided into subtypes based on different kinds and combinations of virus surface proteins. Among the many human subtypes of influenza A viruses, those currently circulating are H1N1 and H7N9. Though influenza can occur anytime of the year, its cases normally peak in winter in temperate regions. Influenza is a vaccine-preventable illness, but a new vaccine is needed each year due to continual changes in the surface proteins of the virus. For optimal protection, the vaccine must contain the strain(s) predicted to predominate in a given season.

Is Influenza contagious?

Influenza is highly contagious. Those infected begin shedding the virus in nasal secretions a day or so before symptoms begin. Adults usually shed the virus for 3 to 5 days thereafter, and young children shed the virus for up to 7 days. Possible means of spread of the infection are by (i) direct exposure to droplets from a sneeze; (ii) breathing in of aerosols generated from coughs and sneezes; and (iii) touching of eyes, nose or mouth with virus-contaminated hands, objects, or environmental surfaces.

What are the symptoms and risks of Influenza?

The infection is characterized by a sudden onset of high fever, cough, headache, muscle and joint pain, severe malaise (feeling unwell), sore throat and runny nose. Most people recover in about a week without requiring medical attention. However, influenza can be a serious and potentially fatal illness in young children, adults 65 years or older, those debilitated by chronic health problems, and the immunosuppressed.

For many, it can be difficult in the early stages of the infection to tell the difference between the common cold and influenza; among the differences are a high fever and sudden onset of extreme fatigue in cases of influenza.

What is the best way to prevent the spread of Influenza?

Getting vaccinated before the onset of the flu season is the best way to protect against the disease, or at least from its severe outcomes. Among healthy adults, timely vaccination can prevent 70-90% of the illness. In the elderly, the vaccine can reduce severe illnesses and complications by up to 60%, and deaths by 80%.

Influenza viruses can be inactivated by sunlight and disinfectants; even detergents such as plain soap can be effective, reinforcing the need for frequent hand washing to reduce the risk of infection.

While alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) with $\geq 62\%$ (vol/vol) ethanol can also be highly effective against influenza viruses, they are an adjunct to and not a replacement for washing with soap and water. Drugs are also now available for the prevention and treatment of influenza.

How can healthcare facilities prevent the spread of Influenza?

Below are the Routine / Standard Precautions healthcare workers should take to protect against influenza.

- Wash hands properly and frequently with plain soap and water, and dry them well. Use an ABHR to decontaminate lightly soiled hands between hand washings.
- Decontaminate high-touch environmental surfaces using disinfectant-soaked wipes making sure to change wipes frequently to avoid cross-contamination of surfaces.
- As much as possible, limit the dissemination of droplets and aerosols from coughs and sneezes to minimize environmental contamination with influenza viruses.
- Apply the disinfectant solution starting with areas least likely to be contaminated to those most likely to be contaminated (eg: high-touch surfaces like toilets, bathroom fixtures, call buttons, bed rails, knobs, switches, phones, etc.). Make sure that all high-touch surfaces are disinfected appropriately.

What if there is an outbreak of Influenza in a healthcare facility?

In addition to Routine / Standard Precautions, implement Contact Precautions as per CDC and Health Canada guidelines with suspected or confirmed cases of influenza.

- Isolate or cohort such patients.
- Use gowns, gloves, surgical masks and eye protection when caring for influenza cases and their environment.
- Exclude healthcare workers with influenza-like symptoms from coming into work until they are no longer infectious.
- Follow the institution's protocol for terminal cleaning of the patient's room following discharge, transfer or discontinuation of Droplet and Contact Precautions.
- All environmental surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected daily. High-touch environmental surfaces in patient wards may require more frequent cleaning and disinfection.
- As much as possible, dedicate patient-care equipment (e.g., thermometers, blood pressure cuff, pulse oximeter, etc.) to influenza cases only during the outbreak.
- Clean/disinfect all patient-care equipment as per Routine / Standard Practices before reuse with another patient; when possible, use single-use devices and discard them safely.
- Discourage the sharing of toys, electronic games or personal effects by patients.

USE **PREvention**[™] AND **INTERvention**[™] AS THE DISINFECTANTS OF CHOICE AGAINST INFLUENZA!

It is easy to formulate a disinfectant that kills Influenza, but it is difficult to formulate a disinfectant that kills Influenza while being easier on users, patients, materials and devices.

Finding the perfect balance was challenging, until now...

All Accel[®] products have a rapid contact time against Influenza.

Accel products are powered by:



FASTER: Kills Influenza in rapid and realistic contact times!

CLEANER: Effective in the presence of soil.

RESPONSIBLE: Easy on staff, patients, materials and devices.

SUSTAINABLE: Hydrogen Peroxide (H₂O₂) breaks down into water and oxygen.

PROVEN: AHP has been the disinfectant technology of choice for over 15 years in Canada for Influenza.

SAVINGS: Stop outbreaks before they begin!

PREvention[™] RTU & Wipes

Product	Accel Prevention
Wipes (0.5% H₂O₂)	
ACCPRE VW-6x7	6"x7" Wipes
ACCINTER VW-10x10	10"x10" Wipes
ACCPRE VW-7x8	7"x8" Wipes
ACCPRE VW-SP	7.5"x10" Soft Pack Wipes
RTU (0.5% H₂O₂)	
ACCPRE VR1	1L Bottle
ACCPRE VR1.89	1.89L Bottle
ACCPRE VR4	4L Bottle
Contact Time for Influenza	3 Minute
Shelf Life	24 Months
DIN #	RTU: 02361094 Wipes: 02364891

*For a complete list of claims, please download the Accel Prevention RTU and Wipes Product Claims Reference Sheets

INTERvention[™] RTU & Wipes

Product	Accel Intervention
Wipes (0.5% H₂O₂)	
ACCINTER VW-6x7	6"x7" Wipes
ACCINTER VW-10x10	10"x10" Wipes
RTU (0.5% H₂O₂)	
ACCINTER VR1	1L Bottle
ACCINTER VR1.89	1.89L Bottle
ACCINTER VR4	4L Bottle
Contact Time for Influenza	1 Minute
Shelf Life	36 Months
DIN #	RTU: 02279746 Wipes: 02367254

*For a complete list of claims, please download the Accel Intervention RTU and Wipes Product Claims Reference Sheets



References:

1. Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Material Safety Data Sheet – Infectious Substances: Influenza A virus. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/lab-bio/res/psds-ftss/influenza-a-eng.php>
2. Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Healthcare Facilities, CDC. MMWR June 2003, Vol 52, No RR-10
3. Best Practices for Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization in All Health Care Settings, Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC), February 2010
4. Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings, HICPAC, 2007
5. Guidelines and Recommendations Prevention Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings, CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/healthcaresettings.htm>
6. Clinical Guidelines for Management of Patients with ILI in Emergency Departments, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, <http://www.virox.com/msds/pdf/GuidelinesforILIinERApril282009.pdf>.
7. CDC Recommendations (2011): Antiviral Agents for the Treatment and Chemoprophylaxis of Influenza - <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6001a1.htm>