

CLEANING

Hotel and Lodging Staff

If a housekeeper or her family have the flu, should she be allowed to work?

One of the best ways to slow and stop the spread of flu is to keep sick people away from well people. Workers with flu-like symptoms (fever, runny or stuffy nose, cough, sore throat, headache or muscle aches, vomiting and diarrhea) should stay home and not come to work until at least 24 hours after their fever has gone away without the help of fever-reducing medication.

Housekeeping staff that are well, but have a sick family member, can go to work as usual. They should take everyday precautions, including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. They should also wear disposable gloves when cleaning, monitor their health and notify their supervisor if they begin to feel sick.

Could a sick employee pass the flu to a customer?

Influenza viruses are spread from person-to-person on respiratory droplets, when a person who is sick coughs or sneezes and someone else breathes it in. It can also be spread when viruses are picked up off surfaces and then enter the body through the mouth, nose or eyes. Sick employees should stay home until they have been without a fever for at least 24 hours without the help of medication.

Do housekeeping staff need to wear facemasks to protect themselves from flu?

No, housekeeping staff do not need to wear facemasks. Facemasks are only recommended for healthcare workers at high risk of exposure to H1N1.

If an employee or a guest gets sick, is special cleaning needed?

No. Routine cleaning and disinfecting will kill flu viruses. Flu viruses can survive on cloth, paper and tissues for up to 12 hours and on hard, non-porous surfaces like stainless steel and plastic for up to 48 hours. A person can get sick if they pick up a virus that has been left on a surface for less than 8 hours. To prevent illness, surfaces and items with frequent hand contact should be cleaned regularly.

Surface areas and items in guest rooms that are likely to have frequent customer hand contact may include light switches, door knobs, drawer handles, toilets, remote controls, sinks, telephones, iron, ironing board, hair dryer, coffee pot, ice bucket, alarm clock and furniture surfaces. Other surfaces and areas with frequent hand contact may include exercise equipment, computer use area, elevator buttons, handrails, dining areas, vending machines and ice machines.

Surfaces or items with frequent employee hand contact may also include cleaning carts, cleaning supplies, office equipment, ice or vending machines, refrigerator and freezer handles, telephones, light switches, thermostats and employee lockers.

Use an EPA-registered disinfectant effective against influenza A viruses and follow these cleaning tips:

- Carefully read and follow directions on the product label.
- Wear disposable gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.
- Discard gloves after use and wash and/or sanitize hands before and after gloving.
- Remove organic material from the surface to be disinfected and follow normal cleaning procedures.
- Rinse off detergents to avoid diluting or inactivating the disinfectant.

Is special cleaning needed for linens and laundry?

No. Routine laundering operations should continue as normal. Housekeeping staff should follow these tips:

- Linens from the room of a person who is sick with the flu do not need to be washed separately.
- Wear disposable gloves when handling linens.
- Don't agitate linens or laundry or hug them to your body when transporting.
- Use standard bleach, soap and hot water laundering processes.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after handling dirty linens.