

CLEANING Schools

Influenza viruses are spread on respiratory droplets that are expelled into the air when a person coughs or sneezes and are then inhaled by someone else, or fall on a surface where they are picked up by someone else and introduced into their body through their eyes, nose or mouth.

Influenza virus can survive on surfaces and infect a person who touches them for up to eight hours.

These viruses can be destroyed by heat (temperatures above 167°F). They can also be destroyed by several chemical germicides – including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, soap detergents, iodine based antiseptics and alcohol – if used at the proper concentration for a sufficient length of time.

To prevent the spread of influenza, contaminated items such as tissues and paper towels should be immediately thrown away. People should wash their hands frequently with soap and water. Also, common surfaces and shared items should be cleaned frequently – including light switches, faucets, door knobs, telephones, vending machines, pencil sharpeners, lockers, athletic equipment and other items that have frequent hand contact. Surfaces should be wiped down routinely with a cleaning agent that is generally used in these areas according to the instructions on the product label. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not necessary to protect against influenza.

Laundry, utensils or dishes used by a sick person do not need to be washed separately. Laundry should be washed with laundry soap and tumbled dry on a hot setting. Dishes and utensils should be washed thoroughly in a dishwasher or by hand with soap and hot water before being re-used. People who handle these items before they are washed should immediately wash their hands with soap and water. In addition, staff are encouraged not to “hug” dirty laundry close to their body before it is washed.