

TOOLBOX TALKS

Pandemic Hazard

A pandemic (from the Greek pan "all" + demos "people") is an epidemic of infectious disease that spreads through human populations across a large region; for instance, a continent, or even worldwide.

Flu pandemics exclude seasonal flu, however the health and hygiene principals for minimizing the chance of catching either are very similar.

Throughout history there have been several pandemics, such as smallpox and tuberculosis. More recent pandemics include the HIV pandemic and the 2009 H1N1 so called Swine Flu pandemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has produced a six-stage classification that describes the process by which a novel influenza virus moves from the first few infections in humans through to a pandemic. This starts with the virus mostly infecting animals, with a few cases where animals infect people, then moves through the stage where the virus begins to spread directly between people and ends with a pandemic when infections from the new virus have spread worldwide.

What can you do to prevent infection?

General infection control practices and good respiratory/ hand hygiene can help to reduce transmission of all viruses, including human pandemic. Naturally whenever a pandemic threat emerges, you'll receive up to date information about specific action to take, however as a general rule the following controls are effective against most types of epidemic and should be used to minimize impact from general colds/flu. They include:

- ✓ Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible and disposing of dirty tissues quickly and carefully
- ✓ Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus. Making use of anti-bacterial sprays/ gels
- ✓ Cleaning hard surfaces (for example, door handles) frequently
- ✓ You should make sure children and other members of your household follow this advice.

Washing Hands

Most cold and flu viruses are spread by direct contact, although you don't necessarily have to be in the same room or at the same time as one another. If someone who has a flu or a cold sneeze onto their hands and then touches the telephone, the keyboard, a door handle or lift buttons etc., germs can be transferred. They may live for hours and in some cases, strains can live for weeks. By washing your hands frequently, this reduces the risk of cross contamination.

Contamination - coughs and sneezes

Don't cover your sneezes and coughs with your hands. Germs and viruses cling to bare hands. Muffling coughs and sneezes with your hands results in passing your germs to others. When sneezing or coughing, use a paper tissue and discard hygienically immediately. If you do have to use your hands, make sure you avoid touching any surfaces or shaking hands with other people before going to wash them.

Don't touch your face. Cold and flu viruses enter your body through the eyes, nose or mouth. Touching their faces is the major way children catch colds and is a key way they are passed onto their parents.

Look after yourself and get plenty of fresh air & exercise

Drink plenty of fluids. Drinking water flushes your system removing toxins and re-hydrates you. A typical healthy adult needs eight 8 – ounce glasses of fluids each day. A good indication to ensure your body is receiving enough liquid is the colour of your urine. If clear, your body is sufficiently hydrated; a deep yellow colour may indicate that your body requires more fluids.

Being outdoors is important, especially in cold weather as central heating dries your body's natural fluid levels and makes you more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses. During cold weather people stay indoors more which means more germs are circulating in crowded, dry rooms.

Aerobic exercise speeds up the heart rate and larger quantities of blood are pumped around the body. This makes you breathe faster to help transfer oxygen from your lungs to your blood. This helps to increase the body's natural virus-killing ability.

Warning: People with underlying medical conditions should consult their doctors before any increase in exercise levels

Don't Smoke and Cut Alcohol Consumption

Statistics show that heavy smokers get more severe colds and more frequent ones. Smoke dries out your nasal passages and paralyzes cilia. These are the delicate hairs that line the mucus membranes in your nose and lungs. Their wavy movements help to sweep away cold and flu viruses out of the nasal passage. Experts contend that one cigarette can paralyse cilia for as long as 30 to 40 minutes.

Heavy alcohol intake destroys the liver; the body's primary filtering system. A damaged liver means that germs won't leave your body as quickly as a person with a healthy liver. Heavy drinkers are more prone to initial and secondary infections. Alcohol also dehydrates the body; actually, taking more fluid from your system than it puts in.

Pandemic Hazard – Questions

Q1. What is a Pandemic?

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Q2. What steps can you take to minimize the spread of a pandemic/ flu disease?

A1

A2

A3

A4

A5

Q3. Germs on hard surfaces only live for a few minutes: True or False

A

Q4 Names 3 things you can do to increase your immunity to catching a flu like infection?

A1

A2

A3

Employee Name:

Employee Number:

Manager's Name:

Date: