

Infection Control Guidelines

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines based on recommendations from the Center of Disease Control for controlling the spread of communicable infections in the workplace setting.

SCOPE

University-wide

DEFINITIONS

Infection control: policies and procedures established for the surveillance, prevention, and control of infection.

Presenteeism: the practice of being on the job while experiencing or displaying/experiencing symptoms of illness that undermine productivity. Health conditions most typically associated with presenteeism include flu/colds, gastrointestinal disorders, depression, back and joint pain.

Pathogens: microorganisms (e.g., bacteria, viruses, or parasites) that can cause disease in humans, animals, and plants.

INTRODUCTION

Infections are caused by human pathogens, such as bacteria, viruses, and microorganisms, which can invade the body and compromise its well-being. Any situation that brings people together provides an opportunity for the transmission of infectious agents. Infection control in the workplace focuses on pathogens that are transmitted by person-to-person contact or eating and drinking.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION

There are a variety of ways in which infections can spread from person to person. These are referred to as the modes of transmission. Knowing mode of transmission is important in controlling the spread of infection.

1. **Contact:** this is the most frequent mode of transmission and involves direct contact between persons in which one person is infected and the infectious organism spreads to other persons by direct contact such as touching. It can also involve indirect contact where-in a non-infected person touches the surface of an object that was touched by an infected person.
 - a. Touching or being exposed to body fluids such as blood, or saliva, which contain infectious organisms, can also cause infection.
 - b. There are some infections caused by contact which are not expected to occur in the workplace. Additional information on infections caused by intimate contact can be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control website: www.cdc.gov
2. **airborne:** droplets from sneezing or coughing can spread or carry infectious agents through the air from one person to another.
3. **common vehicle:** spread of diseases through contaminated food, water, etc.
4. **vector:** diseases that are carried by an animal such as mosquitoes, ticks, fleas and transmitted to humans by biting.

GUIDELINES FOR PREVENTION

Workplace Environment

- Ensure that the work area is clutter-free and well-lit to discourage the presence of insects and vermin.
- Trim back plants and hedges close to entry doors.

- Report to Facilities Work Management (7-4600 or workmgmt@fiu.edu) ponding of water in the vicinity of your building.
- Assure doors and windows do not leak and there are no openings.
- Do not discard food in uncovered garbage containers.
- Do not leave items that decompose in the trash overnight, especially not on weekends.
- Do not leave food opened and unattended.
- Routinely clean commonly shared items, such as telephones, with surface disinfectant such as Lysol sanitizing wipes. Shared equipment, such as keyboards and equipment requiring data entry, should not be ignored.
- Use tissues only once and dispose properly.
- Discourage “presenteeism”.
- Do not touch, feed, or play with animals.
- Keep broken skin covered with a band-aid, or appropriate wound protection.
- Do not share personal items such as hairbrushes, drinking cups, make-up, etc.

Germ “Hot” Zones

- Identify “hot zones” for germ transmission.
 - doorknobs, stair railings, elevator buttons, employee break rooms
- Consider Installing “no touch” technology.
 - automatic touchless hand sanitizers, sinks, toilets, and hand dryers
- Provide surface and hand sanitizers in the break room.
 - disposable surface sanitizing wipes (i.e., Clorox wipes) can be used to wipe down food contact surfaces.
- Stress the importance of daily surface sanitation.

Personal Hygiene

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is an important aid in the prevention of contamination and cross transmission of microorganisms among employees. Frequent handwashing can reduce the spread of infections in the workplace by removing microorganisms that are acquired during daily activities.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) advises that hand washing should take place as follows:

- Before preparing or eating food.
- After going to the bathroom.
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom.
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick.
- Before and after contact with patients (medical setting)
- After gloves are removed (medical and lab setting)
- After handling uncooked foods, particularly raw meat, poultry, or fish.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After handling an animal or animal waste.
- After handling garbage.
- Before and after treating a cut or wound.

Essential Components of Handwashing

Friction: removes visible soiling, dead skin cells, and other material which may harbor pathogenic microorganisms

Soap: to loosen skin oils as well as remove dirt and body fluids

Warm Water: to rinse off loosened dirt, debris, and pathogenic particles.

Types of Hand Hygiene Agents

Alcohol-based hand products

- Less damaging to skin than soap and water
- reduces time needed for hand disinfection.
- more effective than soap and water
- more accessible than sinks
- reduces bacterial counts.
- improves skin condition.

Anti-microbial hand products

- effectively removes transient flora, dirt, blood, and bodily fluids.
- destroys contaminating and colonizing flora.

Plain soap

- removes some transient flora, dirt, blood, and bodily fluids.
- not as effective as anti-microbial or alcohol-based products.

Administrative Measures

- Educate the importance of handwashing.
 - reminders should be posted in restrooms and kitchen areas.
 - ensure that there are adequate amounts of hand-washing supplies (soap, absorbent towels, etc.)
- Encourage good hand-hygiene habits and provide appropriate administrative support and financial resources to stock necessary supplies to maintain high standards of hygiene in your unit.
- As part of the departmental program to improve hand-hygiene adherence, provide employees with a readily accessible alcohol-based hand-rub product.

Food Precautions

When eating or preparing foods in the workplace, it is important to follow food safety guidelines to prevent harmful bacteria from causing food-borne illness. These recommendations will help to minimize food-borne illness:

- Wash hands before and after handling any types of food or drink.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating.
- Food items are **absolutely prohibited** in laboratories.
- Do not share eating utensils or drinking devices, etc. with others in the workplace.
- When you have finished eating, seal food remains in a plastic bag and discard in a waste receptacle to prevent attracting insects, etc.

REPORTING

Effective infection control practices require:

- 1) knowing the facts
- 2) applying the principles

A departmental workgroup responsible to monitor departmental hygiene practices such as sanitation, food preparation/storage and disposal, and monitoring for “presenteeism” may be an effective way to apply infection prevention principles in each work area.

[Incidence/Outbreak Reporting](#)

If an area reports the possibility of exposure to an infectious disease in the workplace, areas respond as follows:

[Environmental Health & Safety \(EH&S\)](#)

- Investigate the situation to identify the source of infection and other potentially exposed persons.
- Interview the supervisor who reported the incident and the affected individual(s).
- Consult with Student Health Services, FIU Health, and Miami-Dade Department of Health for options if the possibility of epidemic/outbreak exists.
- Coordinate with Academic Space to relocate class sessions in affected areas if necessary.
- Distribute educational flyers pertaining to infection control and good hygiene in the workplace.

[Student Health Services/FIU Health](#)

- Respond to correspondence regarding symptoms and advise.
- Assess possible epidemic/outbreaks and, if appropriate, contact proper health authorities and follow-up as required.
- Distribute educational information concerning symptoms, treatment, and prevention.

[Facilities and Custodial Services](#)

- Decontaminate affected facilities as recommended by CDC.
- Ensure custodial personnel have been trained on disinfection and cleaning as it pertains to infection control.

[Employees and Students](#)

- Continue to encourage and practice good hygiene habits (cough etiquette, handwashing, etc.).
- Consult with your physician and seek medical attention if needed.
- Do not report to work or class if you are sick.

The best defense against becoming infected is to learn and understand the facts related to infection control and prevention and to apply these in a prudent and responsible manner.

Please contact the Department of Environmental Health and Safety with any questions you may have about these safety guidelines at ehs@fiu.edu.