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■ DISEASE CONTROL BRANCH

OCTOBER 2007

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING RESPIRATORY ILLNESS IN CLINICAL SETTINGS

Preparing for possible respiratory illness outbreaks:

It is important to:

- Have and disseminate a written policy concerning respiratory illness outbreak management
- Encourage employees who have a respiratory illness to remain at home until they are no longer contagious.
- Strongly encourage influenza vaccination of all employees and take measures to improve employee access to the vaccine.
- Educate employees about the risk of influenza to their patients, themselves, and their families, and about the benefits of vaccination.
- Offer influenza vaccine to unvaccinated patients before they are discharged.

Surveillance Activities:

- Document the incidence of reported respiratory illness and influenza-like illness.
- Consider respiratory testing of patients admitted from the Emergency Department who have influenza-like illness with no other identified pathogens (contact Public Health for free assistance with samples and testing).
- Consider patients who develop influenza-like illness >72 hours after facility admission as potential cases of nosocomial acquired respiratory or influenza-like illness.
- Initiate respiratory illness testing and droplet precautions when healthcare facility-acquired respiratory illness is detected.
- Consider daily monitoring for respiratory illness in selected settings, such as units with particularly vulnerable patients, including intensive care units and oncology units.
- Report disease outbreaks to Disease Control at (951) 358-5107; after hours at (951) 782-2974.

Control measures for influenza-like illness in patient waiting areas:

Visual Alerts

Post visual alerts (in appropriate languages) at the entrance to outpatient facilities (e.g., emergency departments, physician offices, outpatient clinics) instructing patients and persons who accompany them (e.g. family, friends) to inform healthcare personnel of symptoms of a respiratory infection when they first register for care and to practice Respiratory/ Hygiene/ Cough Etiquette.

Visual Alerts (cont.)

- *Notice to Patients to Report Flu Symptoms*
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/Infdis/RespiratoryPoster.pdf
Emphasizes covering coughs and sneezes and the cleaning of hands
- *Cover your Cough*
www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm
Tips to prevent the spread of germs from coughing
- *Information about Personal Protective Equipment*
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ppe.html
Demonstrates the sequences for donning and removing personal protective equipment

Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette

The following measures to contain respiratory secretions are recommended for all individuals with signs and symptoms of a respiratory infection.

- Cover the nose/mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Use tissues to contain respiratory secretions and dispose of them in the nearest waste receptacle after use.
- Perform hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol based hand rub, or antiseptic hand wash) after having contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.

Initiate droplet precautions for persons with respiratory or influenza-like illness or confirmed influenza including

- Physically segregate patients with respiratory symptoms from other patients by at least three feet when possible.
- Designate a separate unit for patients with respiratory or influenza-like illness.
- Wear a mask when within 3 feet of the patient.
- Wear a gown if clothing is likely to be soiled by body fluids, and ensure proper disposal.
- Provide tissues and no-touch receptacles for used tissue disposal.