



Safety & Infection Prevention

A Fact Sheet

Introduction

Infectious respiratory diseases like colds, influenza and pneumonia are a major cause of illness, absenteeism, lost productivity and death. There are 60,000 hospitalizations and 8,000 deaths in Canada every year that are attributed to infectious respiratory diseases.

Clients and staff in *all* health care settings have an increased risk of transmitting acute respiratory infections. Super infections are secondary bacteria-caused infections that usually develop while your body is fighting off a virus (such as a bad cold or the flu).

The most dangerous and lethal super infections are secondary pneumonias. These secondary infections significantly contribute to the 500,000 deaths attributed to influenza worldwide.

Preventing Infection

- **Wash Your Hands Often** – Handwashing is the best way to prevent illness. However it is important to wash your hands correctly. See handwashing directions above the sink in our washrooms.
- **Cover your cough or sneeze** – Coughing and sneezing into a tissue or into your sleeve will help prevent the spread of disease.
- **Stay home when you are sick** – If a person goes to work (or comes to a medical appointment when they have a respiratory illness), they can spread infection from person to person, starting a cycle of illness. Stay home when you are sick to limit transmission. Return to work or attend an appointment when you are feeling better.
- **Get your annual flu shot** – Immunization against diseases that can be prevented through vaccination is one of the most effective strategies for remaining healthy. The flu vaccine is the best option for preventing illness from influenza. Get your flu shot and reduce your chance of getting the flu.



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Waterloo Wellington

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Waterloo Wellington

Infection Safety: it's in Our Hands!

For more information call

519-883-2006 x 5147

to speak with a Public Health
Inspector, or visit:

www.region.waterloo.on.ca/ph

Who is most at-risk?

- Research shows that people with close ties to their loved ones are less susceptible to colds than socially isolated individuals
- Smokers have more frequent and severe colds (that are more likely to produce secondary complications like pneumonia)
- Heavy alcohol use suppresses the immune system, and makes one more susceptible to viruses and secondary complications
- Medically fragile people with asthma, COPD, and emphysema (as well as those with compromised immune systems from diabetes, cardiovascular disease, pregnancy, kidney dialysis, and/or obesity) face an increased risk of infection