

## PROPER HYGIENE AND CLEANING EDUCATION: Q&A

### **Q. What is the difference between cleaning and disinfecting?**

**A.** Cleaning is the removal of visible indicators (see the dirt) and disinfection kills the unseen. Surfaces may appear clean but still be contaminated by microorganisms commonly found in the environment. <sup>1</sup>

### **Q. What are germs?**

**A.** Germs refer to a multitude of microscopic invaders. They are bacteria, viruses and other infectious organisms. Some of these organisms won't harm you; however some bacteria and viruses are formidable adversaries because they mutate to breach your immune system's defenses. <sup>2</sup>

### **Q. What should be cleaned and disinfected to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and where do germs hide?**

**A.** Clean and disinfect things that users contact. Germs are everywhere: doorknobs, pens, light switches, remote controls, equipment handles, elevator buttons, stair rails, ATM machines, computers<sup>1</sup> and, of course, other people. Germs spread most often by hands. However, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) recommends not sharing personal items and make sure cloth towels go in a hot dryer and are completely dry. <sup>3</sup>

### **Q. What is the benefit of hand washing and antibacterial soaps?**

**A.** The CDC recognizes hand washing as one of the most important means of preventing germs from spreading. Plain soap removes the surface dirt, but antibacterial soap remains on the skin when used properly and has special ingredients for killing germs. <sup>3</sup>

### **Q. What is the proper way to clean your hands?**

**A.** *When a sink is available, do the following:* <sup>4</sup>

1. Wet your hands under warm running water.
2. Add soap, lather up (not under the running water) while singing Happy Birthday twice; or scrub hands back and front, wrists, between fingers and under nails while counting for 20 seconds.
3. Rinse thoroughly under warm running water.
4. Dry hands with clean towel, use towel to shut off water, open door and leave room.

**B.** *When using Clean Holdings Hand Sanitizer, do the following:*

1. Dispense enough in your palm to cover all surfaces of hands completely.
2. Rub hands together until dry. Does not require rinsing.
3. Make sure any hand sanitizer you are using contains at least 60% ethanol.

### **Q. What is the proper way to use a disinfectant?**

**A.** Firstly, read the label and follow directions. By law, a disinfectant must have an EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) registration number to meet their criteria. <sup>3</sup> It's very important to note that to properly disinfect, the solution must stay on the surface for at least 10 minutes. Spraying and wiping is not sufficient to fully disinfect. The Stearns Mark 11 is an EPA registered disinfectant.

### **Q. What is Staphylococcus aureus and what is MRSA?**

**A.** Staphylococcus aureus:

Often referred to simply as "staph," it is a bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the noses of healthy people. Approximately 25-30% of the population is colonized in the nose with staph bacteria. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin

infections in the U.S. It is visible on the skin and may appear as pimples or boils. Some forms are treatable with antibiotics (also known as antimicrobials or antibacterials). However, staph bacteria can also cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia).

**MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus):**

This is a type of bacteria resistant to certain antibiotics. These infections are also skin infections, such as abscesses, boils and other pus-filled lesions. MRSA used to be mostly restricted to healthcare facilities, but is now found in communities. <sup>6</sup>

**Q. What is H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)?**

**A.** H1N1 (sometimes called "swine flu") is an influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that a pandemic of 2009 H1N1 flu was underway.

This virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in the virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that the 2009 H1N1 is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a "quadruple reassortant" virus.<sup>3</sup>

Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm> for updates.

The flu is spread through coughing and sneezing from people that are sick with the virus, but also spread by touching an infected object and then touching your mouth or nose. <sup>5</sup>

**Q. What is C. Diff and is it spreading beyond hospitals?**

**A.** C. Diff stands for Clostridium Difficile. It is a bacterium of the human intestines. This strain is found mostly in hospitals or nursing homes causing a disruption of the normal intestinal flora that can lead to an inflammation of the colon. It can possibly be treated with antibiotics and be more serious for the elderly.<sup>7</sup> According to the latest article, "Tough to Kill C. Diff," the disease may be spreading to other types of facilities as well. The best defense against the disease is proper hand washing. <sup>8</sup>

**Q. Is catching a staph infection preventable?**

**A.** Yes! **CLEAN YOUR HANDS WITH SANITIZER!** Practice good hygiene: cover wounds, don't touch another person's wound, and don't share personal items. <sup>6</sup>

**Q. Why do products say "kills 99.9% of germs?"**

**A.** A claim cannot be made to kill 100% unless the surface or your hands are sterile. Sterilization is the complete destruction of germs by chemical, high temperature, or all microorganisms. Surgical instruments are an example of 100% sterilization. <sup>1</sup>

**SOURCES SITED:**

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