



January 16, 2004

Memorandum

TO: Chief Executive Officers of Healthcare Organizations

SUBJECT: Recommended Guidelines for Infection Control and Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette Strategy for Health Care Facilities and Accompanying Posters

COPIES TO: APIC Members; CAPES Service Liaisons; Ambulatory Services, ED Nursing, Hospital Operations, Infection Control, Nursing, Patient Safety & Quality Contacts; Members of the CAPES Committee; Infection Control and Nursing Subcommittees

In order to maintain a safe environment in health care facilities, basic infection control practices (such as hand hygiene) must be reinforced within the health care institution. This includes protecting patients, health care workers, visitors and others in the health care environment. In addition, hospitals should adhere to their policies that address ill health care workers. Many viral and some bacterial respiratory pathogens (e.g., influenza, adenovirus, respiratory syncytial virus, *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*) share transmission characteristics with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome -associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and are frequently transmitted in health care settings. Implementation of "respiratory etiquette" practices can decrease the risk of transmission from unrecognized SARS patients and can control the spread of other more common respiratory pathogens.

The Infection Control Subcommittee of MCHC's Committee on Clinical, Administrative, Professional & Emergency Services recently developed the attached guidance document for hospitals developing a respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette strategy. Two posters were also drafted addressing cough etiquette. The first poster – "*Stop Spreading Germs!*" is geared toward patients and visitors; the second, "*Stop Bugs Dead in Their Tracks!*" is geared toward staff in the health care facility. Fundamental infection control principals are emphasized in both posters. However, the only difference in the messages are that patients and visitors are asked to cough into their upper sleeve if they do not have a tissue while staff are asked to cover their mouth with their hands and then clean their hands. While there is no excuse for staff not cleaning their hands; patients and visitors in waiting rooms may not understand the importance of cleaning their hands every time they cough.

Some areas where it may be beneficial to hang the posters might include:

FOR PATIENTS & VISITORS	FOR STAFF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrance Areas</li> <li>• Lobbies</li> <li>• Waiting Areas</li> <li>• Intake/Registration Areas</li> <li>• Emergency Department</li> <li>• Admitting</li> <li>• Outpatient Areas (Lab, Radiology, etc)</li> <li>• Clinics</li> <li>• Physician Offices</li> <li>• Gift Shop</li> <li>• Coffee Shop/Cafeteria</li> <li>• Public Washrooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursing Stations</li> <li>• Staff Lounges</li> <li>• Staff Locker Rooms</li> <li>• Medication Rooms</li> <li>• Staff Cafeteria/Dining Rooms</li> <li>• Physician Lounges</li> <li>• Physician Dictation Areas</li> <li>• At Employee Entrances/Time Clocks</li> <li>• Staff Washrooms</li> </ul>

The documents are attached. They are also available on the MCHC/CAPES web site ([www.mchc.org/CAPES](http://www.mchc.org/CAPES)) and IHA web site ([www.ihatoday.org](http://www.ihatoday.org)) for download in both PDF and WORD formats for your convenience. Spanish language versions of the posters will be available in the near future. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact Linnea O'Neill at 312/906-6061 or e-mail at [loNeill@mchc.com](mailto:loNeill@mchc.com).

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Enclosures: Recommended Guidelines for Infection Control and Respiratory Hygiene/Cough  
 Etiquette Strategy for Health Care Facilities  
 POSTER – “*Stop Spreading Germs!*” (For Patients & Visitors)  
 POSTER - “*Stop Bugs Dead in Their Tracks!*” (For Staff)