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South West Infection Prevention & Control (IPAC) Hub

- Huron Perth & Area Ontario Health Team
- Middlesex-London Health Unit
- Southwestern Public Health

South West IPAC Hub Update

Dec 07, 2022

Dear Congregate Living Organization Partners,

December IPAC Hub Newsletter

Keeping the Holidays Safe

Keeping your loved ones healthy – strategies for keeping the holiday safe

1. Vaccinate – keep yourself and your loved ones safe by vaccinating against influenza and COVID-19. Individuals who reside or work in institutions such as long-term care facilities are strongly recommended to obtain their booster dose of COVID-19.
2. Wear a mask – Masking is still mandatory for staff and visitors entering Long Term Care facilities. Although not mandatory at this time, it is strongly recommended that visitors continue to wear a mask when visitors are alone with residents in their own room.
3. Wash your hands – Hand washing remains a critical component of infection control and reducing the spread of illnesses. Hands should be washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Alcohol hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and

water are not available.

4. Sneeze and cough etiquette – to limit the spread of illnesses, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing or coughing. Discard the tissue in the garbage. If tissues are not available, cough or sneeze into your elbows, not your hands.
5. Stay home if you are ill – remind staff and visitors should refrain from working or visiting individuals living in congregate settings when they are ill. These symptoms can include but not limited to runny nose, sore throat, cough, diarrhea, vomiting, and headache. It is important to note that even if an individual tests negative for COVID-19, symptomatic individuals must remain home until they are feeling better. Prior to any gathering, remind participants to self-screen for any symptoms.
6. Outside is safer – although this may not be possible in colder climate, holding gatherings outdoors reduces the risk of transmission. Viral particles are more dispersed and do not concentrate in the same way as they do indoors.

Ventilation

Limiting the transmission of viruses requires a multifaceted approach. Factors affecting transmission can include the infected person's age, viral load, presence of symptoms, infection control practices, and environmental factors that increase the likelihood of transmission. When an ill person speaks, coughs or sneezes, aerosols are produced and contaminates the air in the surrounding environment. Over time, the contaminated aerosols become concentrated and can lead to transmission. Good ventilation can reduce the concentration of aerosols that is suspended in the air and limit spread of respiratory pathogens including COVID-19 and influenza by exchanging indoor air with outdoor air. This dilutes or removes contaminated air and reduces the risk of transmission.

One way to improve ventilation is to open the window or door. In colder seasons where this may be difficult or not practical, windows or doors can be opened for several minutes at a time. The HVAC system can also be used for indoor/outdoor air exchange. The HVAC fan can be set to a lower speed minimizing unwanted draft while providing air movement and filtration.

Outbreak testing – using FLUVID vs. MRVP?

Testing of symptomatic staff and residents is very important in

identifying a potential outbreak and so that infection prevention and control measures can be implemented to mitigate transmission of pathogens.

Multiplex respiratory virus PCR (MRVP) and FLUVID are two common respiratory testing methods that are utilized in outbreak and non-outbreak scenarios. So, what's the difference?

MRVP detects a host of common respiratory pathogens including influenza, RSV, parainfluenza, rhinovirus, seasonal human coronavirus and many more. FLUVID on the other hand, detects a narrower list of pathogens which includes influenza A, influenza B, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). The turnaround time for FLUVID testing can be quicker than MRVP and often used as an initial testing followed by MRVP. Currently, any symptomatic staff or resident in an outbreak-related situation are eligible for FLUVID testing.

Kind Regards,

South West IPAC Hub

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