

Safety Newsletter



Central Region
School Insurance Group

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Holidays on the Horizon

Decorating is imminent as we move into the holiday season. Although, this is a fun and festive time for most, these decorations pose a risk. Christmas lights, ornaments, and paper art decoration can be flammable and may be a fire hazard. When decorating your office or classroom keep these decorating tips in mind to minimize fire hazards:

- Is there a fire extinguisher available and in good repair for your office and classroom? Fire extinguishers should be serviced annually and checked monthly.
- Decorations, equipment, and materials should not block the fire extinguisher or fire alarm pull stations. The fire extinguisher and fire alarm pull stations must be accessible and visible.
- Ensure there are NO open flames on school premises at any time. Candles smell and look nice, but should not be used. Plug-in air fresheners and warming plates should also be avoided.
- Avoid hanging art and holiday decorations, like streamers and ornaments, from the ceiling. Blocking sprinkler heads is a fire code violation. Materials hanging near light fixtures pose a fire hazard.
- Keep decorations to a minimum. Try to hang art or decorations 18" from the ceiling, 12" from the ground, and also 18" from any door.

We all want to join in the fun and festivities, but we must do so safely. Being proactive and safe should be the first priority so that all employees and students can go home safely and celebrate with their own friends and families.

What About the Pests?

Controlling pest infestations help provide healthier school environments and better indoor air quality. Some pests can trigger allergies or even spread disease. Luckily, your school district has an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program which serves to keep you, your students, and the school grounds healthy by controlling pests with minimal use of pesticides. Whenever possible, IPM will first attempt to control and eliminate pests through non-chemical means and progress to a low-risk chemical if needed. The aim to IPM is control pests and limit human exposure to chemicals. Therefore, the best approach is to prevent an infestation in the first place. One of the best practices is to ensure food and garbage is stored in a way that does not attract pests. This includes cleaning garbage cans and taking out the trash at the end of each work day. What happens if the pesky pests decide to invade your space anyway? Common pests include cockroaches, rodents, ants, bees and wasps. If there are evidence of any pests in your work area the best approach here is to contact your school office or IPM Coordinator immediately. Employees are prohibited from bringing in their own bug sprays or pesticides. Do not attempt to remedy the situation by yourself by spraying pests. Instead, request for assistance by putting in a work order or working

through the proper channels that your school district has set up for reporting pests at your site.

Do You Get Enough Sleep?

Getting an extra hour of sleep may sound like a good trade off, but the change in time schedules often can cause other issues. Sufficient sleep is essential for a healthy lifestyle.

How much sleep do adults need? Insufficient sleep is defined as less than 7 hours of sleep daily. More than a third of U.S. adults report insufficient sleep. Adults should sleep 7 or more hours each night for optimal health.

What are the consequences of not getting enough sleep? Not getting enough sleep is associated with an increased risk for a number of chronic diseases and conditions:

- Diabetes
- Stroke
- Depression
- Cardiovascular disease
- Obesity

Not getting enough sleep also contributes to motor vehicle crashes and machinery-related injuries, causing substantial injury and disability each year.

Five health behaviors for preventing chronic disease:

- Not smoking
- Regular physical activity
- Moderate* or no alcohol consumption
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Daily sufficient sleep (7 or more hours)

Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep- This may be difficult but important to ensure you are alert during the day. Driving while fatigued or drowsy can be as dangerous as driving under the influence. In addition, being fatigued can also affect your ability to operate equipment and other machinery which can lead to accidents.

HAND WASHING

Proper hygiene is the number one defense against viruses. The American Society for Microbiology conducted an experiment to find out how many people who said they washed their hands after using a public restroom actually did so, and discovered that only two-thirds were following through. Those who don't wash their hands are potentially spreading viruses and bacteria.

The risks of poor hand hygiene don't stop in the restroom. Microbes carrying cold and influenza can lurk for days on door handles, light switches, desks *and computer keyboards*. Then one touch to the nose or mouth, and a person may become ill. It is a vicious cycle that can quickly escalate to an epidemic. Symptoms can be hard on a healthy adult, but for children, the elderly and people with compromised immune systems, they can be deadly.

Hand washing by students, volunteers, and employees can protect everyone from disease, reduce absenteeism and "presenteeism" (sick people coming to work), increase productivity, protect funding in schools and help contain escalating group health insurance premiums.

How to wash your hands. It's generally best to wash your hands with soap and water. Follow these simple steps:

- Wet your hands with running water.
- Apply liquid, bar or powder soap. Lather well.
- Rub your hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds. Remember to scrub all surfaces, including the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
- Rinse well.
- Dry your hands with a clean, disposable towel or air dryer.
- If possible, use your towel to turn off the faucet.
- Keep in mind that antibacterial soap is no more effective at killing germs than is regular soap.

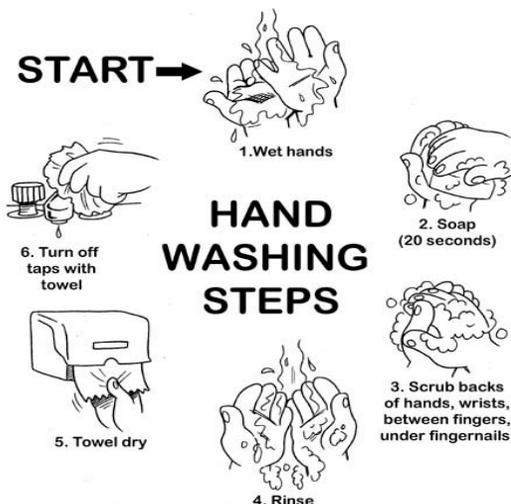
When to wash your hands?

As you touch people, surfaces and objects throughout the day, you accumulate germs on your hands. In turn, you can infect yourself with these germs by touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Although it's impossible to keep your hands germ-free, washing your hands frequently can help limit the transfer of bacteria, viruses and other microbes.

Always wash your hands before:

- Preparing food or eating food or snacks
 - Treating wounds or giving medicine
 - Touching a sick or injured person
 - Inserting or removing contact lenses
- Always wash your hands after:**
- Preparing food, especially raw meat/poultry
 - Using the toilet
 - Changing a diaper
 - Touching an animal, animal toys, leashes or waste
 - Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing into your hands
 - Treating wounds, or Touching a sick or injured person
 - Handling garbage or tools that could be contaminated, such as a broom or mop.
 - Of course, it's also important to wash your hands whenever they look dirty.

Officials from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) hope hand washing becomes a habit. With the flu season progressing, now is not the time for us to let our guard down when it comes to proper hand hygiene.



Take these everyday steps to protect your health.

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.



Other important actions that you can take are:

- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, tissues and other related items could help you to avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious.

What is the difference between a cold and flu? Flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses but they are caused by different viruses. Because these two types of illnesses have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. In general, flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms are more common and intense. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations. Flu can have very serious associated complications.

How can you tell the difference between a cold and the flu? Because colds and flu share many symptoms, it can be difficult (or even impossible) to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Special tests that usually must be done within the first few days of illness can tell if a person has the flu.

What are the symptoms of the flu versus the symptoms of a cold? The symptoms of flu can include fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigue (tiredness). Cold symptoms are usually milder than the symptoms of flu.

Is it a cold or flu?			
	CDC		
Signs and Symptoms	Influenza	Cold	
Symptom onset	Abrupt	Gradual	
Fever	Usual	Rare	
Aches	Usual	Slight	
Chills	Fairly common	Uncommon	
Fatigue, weakness	Usual	Sometimes	
Sneezing	Sometimes	Common	
Stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common	
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	
Chest discomfort, cough	Common	Mild to moderate	
Headache	Common	Rare	