

Pandemic Policy
St Timothy's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Pembroke, Ontario

Background Information

At the 2007 National Evangelical Lutheran Church Convention a resolution was passed to indicate that congregations should be pandemic planning in conjunction with the local and provincial health agencies.

Definitions:

Influenza

Influenza or “the flu” Influenza (or flu) is a common respiratory illness affecting millions of Canadians each year. Influenza is a respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus. Various strains of the virus circulate throughout the world year-round, causing local outbreaks. In Canada, flu season usually runs from November to April and an estimated 10-25% of Canadians may get the flu each year. Although most of these people recover completely, an estimated 500-1500 Canadians, mostly seniors, die every year from pneumonia related to flu and many others may die from other serious complications of flu.

Pandemic Influenza

The virus that causes “the flu” is constantly changing. A pandemic may start when three conditions are met:

- 1) a completely new strain of influenza virus emerges that is different from the common strains that have been circulating
- 2) the virus spreads easily from person to person; and
- 3) the virus has the ability to cause serious illness in people.

Self Care

The first step in Pandemic Planning is to look at “Self Care” Influenza is a disease of the lungs and airways. It is very contagious and people can pass on the virus for up to seven days before they actually have symptoms. We can pick up this virus in many different ways; coughing, sneezing, kissing someone who had the virus, contacting objects that people who have the virus have coughed or sneezed on such as hands, door knobs, dishes, handrails. The influenza virus spreads through droplets that have been coughed or sneezed into the air by someone who has the flu. You can get the flu by breathing in these droplets through your nose or mouth, or by the droplets landing directly on your eyes. The flu virus is also found on the hands of people with the flu and on surfaces they have touched. There should be minimal contact with secretions from other people. If you are

sneezing or coughing you should remember to cover your nose and mouth with a disposable handkerchief. This should be discarded as soon it is used. You should make sure that you are getting enough sleep each night and that you are eating a well balanced diet.

The next step is to recognize the symptoms of influenza. A true case of influenza typically starts with a headache, chills and cough, which are followed rapidly by fever, loss of appetite, muscle aches and fatigue, runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes and throat irritation. Most people recover within a week or ten days. However, some are at greater risk for more severe and longer-lasting complications, such as pneumonia. The groups at greater risk include very young children, people over 65, and people who already have medical conditions, such as chronic respiratory disease, heart or kidney disease, diabetes or a depressed immune system because of cancer, HIV infection, or some other cause.

Prevention of Influenza

Vaccination is the best way to avoid or lessen the severity of influenza. This usually becomes available in early fall and so we should watch the paper to see when the Health Unit has their clinics. Because there is a new strain of virus each year this is a yearly vaccination. The vaccine is for everyone over the age of 6 months. Flu vaccines have been around since the 1940s. The vaccine is made from fragments of inactivated influenza viruses, grown in fertilized hens' eggs and then purified. The flu viruses are capable of changing from year to year, so the composition of the vaccine has to be updated annually. This is why it is necessary to be immunized each fall. After you get flu vaccine, your immune system produces antibodies against the strains of virus in the vaccine. The antibodies are effective for four to six months. When you are exposed to the influenza virus, the antibodies will help to prevent infection or reduce the severity of the illness.

In addition to getting vaccinated the single most important step we can take to prevent influenza is to wash our hands often. This means that we wash with soap and running water, scrubbing the wrists, palms, fingers and nails for 10 to 15 seconds, then rinsing well and drying with a clean paper towel. Never to rub your eyes or touch your mouth or nose.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene refers to removing or killing micro organisms (germs) on the hands. When performed correctly, hand hygiene is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases and infections. Hand hygiene is used to eliminate transient micro organisms that have been picked up. Hand hygiene may be performed either by using soap and running water, or with alcohol-based hand rubs.

Hand hygiene should be performed:

- ! Before preparing, handling, serving or eating food
- ! After performing personal functions (e.g. using the toilet, blowing your nose)
- ! When hands come into contact with secretions, excretions, blood and body fluids (use soap and running water whenever hands are visibly soiled)

- ! Before touching food (e.g. the communion bread)
- ! Before putting the individual cups into the trays

Use of soap and water

The mechanical action of washing, rinsing and drying removes transient bacteria present on the hands. Hand washing with soap and running water must be performed whenever hands are visibly soiled.

Any type of plain soap may be used. However, bar soaps are not acceptable. Liquid soap containers should be used until empty and then discarded. Soap containers **must not** be topped up, as there is a risk of contamination of residual soap. Antibacterial soaps are **not** necessary.

Use of alcohol-based hand rubs

Alcohol-based hand rubs/gels/rinses are the preferred method for decontaminating hands, provided they contain more than 60% alcohol. They are widely used in health care settings, or in situations where running water is not available. Using alcohol-based hand rub is better than washing hands (even with an antibacterial soap) when hands are not visibly soiled. However hand washing should take place after using alcohol based cleansers 10 times.

Intact skin is the first line of defence against micro organisms, hence it is important to maintain good skin care. To prevent chafing, wet your hands before applying soap and use a mild lotion soap with warm water; pat rather than rub hands dry; and apply lotion liberally and frequently. Most alcohol-based hand rubs contain emollients to reduce the incidence of skin irritation. Frequent use of alcohol-based hand rub actually lessens the incidence of skin breakdown, as it does not subject hands to the friction and abrasion involved in hand washing and drying hands.

How to use soap and water

Good hand hygiene technique is easy to learn. Follow these five simple steps to keeping hands clean:

1. Remove hand and arm jewellery and wet your hands with warm (not hot) running water.
2. Add soap, and then rub your hands together, making a soapy lather. Do this for at least 15 seconds, being careful not to wash the lather away. Wash the front and back of your hands, as well as between your fingers and under your nails.
3. Rinse your hands well under warm running water, using a rubbing motion.
4. Wipe and dry hands gently with paper towel. Rubbing vigorously with paper towels can damage the skin. Do not use a reusable towel.
5. Turn off tap using paper towel so that you do not re-contaminate your hands.

How to use alcohol-based hand rubs

Alcohol-based hand rubs should only be used if no visible dirt is present on the hands.

1. Remove hand and arm jewellery.
2. Apply enough antiseptic to make about the size of a quarter onto your hands, enough when you rub your hands together to cover all areas of your hands, including under your nails (1-2 pumps).
3. Use a rubbing motion to evenly distribute the antiseptic product over all surfaces of the hands, particularly between fingers, fingertips, back of hands and base of thumbs.
4. Rub hands until your hands feel dry (minimum 15-30 seconds).

Mistakes I should avoid regarding hand hygiene

- DON'T leave hand jewellery on when performing hand hygiene. Jewellery is very hard to clean and hides bacteria and viruses from the mechanical action of the washing/rubbing.
- DON'T use artificial nails, nail enhancements or long (>3-4mm) nails, as they trap bacteria and are difficult to keep clean.
- DON'T wear chipped nail polish, as bacteria may become trapped along the edges
- DON'T use a standing basin of water to wash hands.
- DON'T use a common hand towel.
- DON'T use sponges or non-disposable cleaning cloths. Remember that germs thrive on moist surfaces.

Courtesy of Community Hospital Infection Control Association.

This Pandemic Plan will be operational when Renfrew County and District Health Unit declare a pandemic in our area.

The following are the steps that will take place during a Pandemic

The Council will:

- Become familiar with Renfrew County and District Health Unit's Pandemic Plan as all activities come under this jurisdiction.
- Consider the fact that funerals/memorial services may need to be delayed until the Pandemic has receded
- Encourage support among the area Lutheran clergy during this time.
- Have a list of who can be called for Pastoral Care if the Pastor is ill.
- Have a current list of service providers handy and identify who may be called in case of an emergency (e.g. furnace repair person, plumber)
- Determine which committees will continue during a Pandemic and determine which are

able to be cancelled

- Encourage people to stay at home if they are ill
- Have alcohol based hand sanitizer at the door and encourage people to use it on entrance and exit from the building.
- Ensure that the procedure for handling communion ware and preparing for communion with is followed with extreme care.
- Ensure that each person assisting with communion washes their hands with alcohol based sanitizer prior to starting communion
- Ensure that the common cup is cleansed inside and out with the purificators between people and the purificators will be changed after serving 10 people.
- Determine if we will continue to share the peace during the pandemic

The Pastor will:

- Visit congregational members only after having received flu vaccine for that year.

Communion Preparation and Administration shall be as follows at all times:

There are two important places to remember the use of hand hygiene.

- 1) The **first** is when preparing the communion and
- 2) The **second** is during the communion.

Communion Preparation

- Everyone touching the bread and the individual cups must use proper hand washing prior to starting.
- The lips of the individual cups should never be touched
- The lips of the individual cups must never be placed on a counter top.
- The counter top no matter how thoroughly cleaned can never be bacteria free.
- Pastor and the worship assistants must wash with alcohol based hand wash prior to starting the communion.
- Alcohol based hand wash is kept on the credence shelf and the window behind the altar rail.
- All other communion ware must be washed with hot soapy water and air dried..

Approved by Congregational Council April 15, 2008

Please give credit to St. Timothy's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Pembroke, Ontario.