

Respiratory Hygiene and Cough Etiquette

Colds and flu are the most common illnesses in society and perhaps the most infectious.

The most common mode of transmission is through aerosols and droplets such as coughs and sneezes. It can also be spread via a more direct route, through hand and surface contact.

Sneezing is a way in which our body tries to get rid of any harmful microbes and dust we might inhale. The harmful microbes and dust get caught on the nose hair and tickle our nose. The nose sends a message to the brain which then sends a message back to your nose, mouth, lungs and chest telling them to blow the irritation away. Coughing is the same reflex action used by the body to clear the lungs, nose and throat.

In the case of colds and flu, millions of viral particles rush out and contaminate the surfaces on which they land; this could be our food or hands. Using a disposable tissue to trap these harmful microbes by covering the nose and mouth and disposing of the tissue in the correct bin will minimise the risk of transmission.

Hands must be washed after wiping and blowing the nose, trapping a sneeze or a cough, as the virus will remain on the hands and can spread quickly by touch.

The individuals you care for may need assistance to trap these harmful microbes and carry out hand hygiene.

Disposable tissues are much more hygienic than cotton handkerchiefs. Tissues should be readily accessible to everyone and all should be encouraged to use a tissue only once, throw it away immediately and to wash their hands afterwards.

For those most at risk of serious complications of flu, there is a vaccine available which offers some protection to vulnerable groups – this includes people living in care homes.

The vaccine should be administered **every year**. However guidance around immunisation can change from time to time, care home management and staff should keep up to date with developments and the latest recommendations.

Immunisation for the flu is about protecting those you care for, taking care of yourself, carers, family and friends.

Preventing Infection in Care

Infection Prevention and Control:
Care Homes for Older People and
Home Environment



To break the chain of infection:

Remember:

- Use a disposable tissue to trap your sneeze or cough
- Discard tissues immediately after use.
- Wash your hands
- Encourage and assist others to adopt good respiratory hygiene practices
- Keep contaminated hands away from the mucous membranes of the eyes and nose