

## Kent County Health Department Preventing the Spread of Flu in the Home *It's as easy as 1, 2, 3*



# HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Caring today for a healthy tomorrow

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### 1 – Wash your hands

Frequent handwashing using soap and water (using a single-use towel for drying) or an alcohol-based hand rub is the first step to staying healthy.

Handwashing is especially important at the following times:

- After caring for someone who is ill
- After sneezing, coughing, or blowing your nose
- After disinfecting surfaces
- After using the restroom
- Before eating

### 2 – Cover your cough

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the used tissue in a waste container.

If you do not have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose with your sleeve or elbow.

### 3 – Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (door knobs, sink handles, light switches, phones, tabletops, etc.)

Flu virus can survive in the environment for different amounts of time (hours to days). Cleaning and disinfection is intended to remove virus from surfaces, therefore preventing spread of illness.

Flu viruses can be inactivated by a range of household disinfectants labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses, including:

- Lysol® Disinfectant Spray
- Unscented Household Bleach (such as Clorox®, Purex®)
- Hydrogen Peroxide
- Alcohol (70% ethyl alcohol)

### Important considerations for disinfecting:

- Follow the manufacturer's recommendation for use, contact time, and handling.
- Visibly dirty surfaces MUST be cleaned before disinfecting. Cleaning can be done with soap and water.
- Bleach solution can be prepared by mixing ¼ cup of chlorine bleach in a gallon of cool water.

### A note on the use of masks

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), since flu virus can be shed by adults one day before symptoms appear and five days after becoming ill, use of masks in the community **may not limit the spread of illness**.

If an individual chooses to buy a mask for personal use, the following should be considered:

- N-95 masks are the most protective disposable mask available (may be purchased at most home improvement stores)
- If N-95 masks are not available, tightly-fitting surgical or procedural masks can be used
- Masks should be replaced when they become moist
- Wash your hands after touching or discarding a mask
- If an unvaccinated, high-risk\* person chooses to wear a mask during periods of increased respiratory illness in the community, it is likely they will need to wear a mask any time they are in a public place and when they are around other household members

\* The CDC identifies people at high-risk for flu complications as children aged 6 months until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, pregnant women, people aged 50 and older, people of any age with chronic medical conditions, and people who live in nursing homes and other long term care facilities.

For complete CDC interim guidance on the use of masks to control influenza transmission, visit  
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/pdf/flumaskguidance.pdf>