



Setting the Record Straight: How can I protect myself against the influenza A (2009 H1N1) virus?

H1N1 Influenza Virus and Hand Washing

According to the **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, the spread of Influenza A (H1N1) virus – commonly but incorrectly called Swine Flu – can be prevented by everyday actions such as **proper hand washing**. (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>)

The **British Columbia Center for Disease Control (BCCDC)** states that **washing one's hands a minimum of five times per day will significantly decrease the frequency of colds, influenza, and other infections**. Hand washing not only helps keep you healthy, but also limits the spread of infectious diseases.

The BCCDC suggests the **use of plain soap that does not contain antibacterial agents**. Plain soap and water will remove the dirt and grease that attract bad bacteria while not killing the good bacteria. Plain soap will also not add to the concentration of antibiotics in the water supply, and will not increase the risk of antibiotic-resistant viruses and bacteria ("superbugs").

Roughly eighty percent of common infections are spread by hands – touching other people or surfaces. Keeping your hands clean will help you remain healthy and will help ensure you do not spread illness to those around you. (<http://www.bccdc.ca/prevention/handhygiene>)

In the US, the **Food and Drug Administration's Non-prescription Drug Advisory Committee (NDAC)** has concluded that there are no populations outside of healthcare settings, where consumer antiseptics are more effective than plain soap and water in reducing infection rates. In the absence of plain soap and water, the NDAC agreed that alcohol based products could potentially be beneficial – but that **antimicrobial soap offers no benefit over plain soap**. (<http://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/ac/05/transcripts/2005-4184T1.pdf>)

The flu virus can live on human hands for up to five minutes, and can live on hard surfaces – such as door handles or telephones – for up to two days. **Washing your hands often will limit the possibility of infectious diseases spreading**. (<http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influence-wash-hands.html>)

Dr. Bonnie Henry – Director of Public Health Emergency Management at the BCCDC – recently published a book titled *Soap and Water and Common Sense*. In this book, Dr. Henry quotes Dr. William Osler as saying: **"Soap and water and common sense really are the best disinfectants."** In fact, Dr. Henry claims that hand washing is one of only three steps that may defend people against the next pandemic: "...The next step is to wash your hands or use alcohol based hand rubs to stop the spread by direct contact and to kill any viruses that may linger on your hands ... may be our first and perhaps only line of defense against the next influenza pandemic."

Furthermore, in Dr. Henry's book, she highlights some myths and truths about "bugs" (microbes), including the myth that superbugs are resistant to hand-washing and cleaning. In fact, **"Washing your hands or using an alcohol-based hand rub will protect you from superbugs just as well as from other bacteria and viruses**. Superbugs may be resistant to some antibiotics, making infections difficult to treat, but they are still susceptible to cleaning and are helpless against good hygiene." (Dr. Bonnie Henry, *Soap and Water and Common Sense* (House of Anasi Press, Inc, Toronto, ON, 2009) pg. 93, 232-233)

The WORX All-Natural Hand Cleaner is the most powerful industrial hand cleaner available, so using it in conjunction with good hand washing technique is the most effective way to protect yourself against the spread of infectious diseases such as H1N1.



This product meets the Green Seal™ environmental standard for industrial hand cleaners based on its reduced human and aquatic toxicity and its reduced smog production potential.

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