

# Education Module

## Airborne Diseases and Prevention

### DISCUSSION:

You can catch some diseases simply by breathing. These are called airborne diseases. Airborne disease can spread when people who carry the airborne pathogens cough, sneeze, or talk; spewing nasal and throat secretions into the air. Some viruses or bacteria take flight and hang in the air or land on other people or surfaces. When you breathe in airborne pathogenic organisms, they take up residence inside you.

You can also pick up these pathogens when you touch a surface that harbors them, and then touch your own eyes, nose, or mouth. Airborne pathogens ARE NOT transmitted via food that has been handled by someone who carries them. They enter the body via the nose, eyes or mouth. Examples of some of the more common Airborne Diseases are the Common Cold, Influenza (the flu), Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox, Whooping Cough, TB, and the newer surfacing diseases such as H1N1 (a form of flu), SARS, MRSA, and now COVID-19.

The CDC (Center for Disease Control) offers these recommendations for the prevention of all of these illnesses:

- Stay Home when sick
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds; hand washing does not kill these pathogens, but hand washing does wash them off and away from your body
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth; if you do, go wash your hands as a prevention for cross-contamination for OTHER potential foodborne illnesses; remember to always wash your hands after touching your face
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue when possible, immediately dispose of the tissue and then immediately wash your hands
  - If no tissue is available, sneeze into your elbow area; then immediately wash your hands and, if not wearing sleeves, wash up to and beyond the elbow area
- Avoid contact with others that are sick

### Other Preventive Measures:

- Clean and disinfect high frequency touch points often. These items include desks, phones, door knobs, equipment handles, pens, light switches, oven and refrigerator doors and handles.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently, and CORRECTLY, with an EPA-registered disinfectant is effective against many of these pathogens including H1N1, SARS, MRSA and SARS-CoV2. Check your manufacturer's SDS for specific pathogen effectiveness.
- EPA registered disinfectants are powerful agents. WASH YOUR HANDS after using them.

This Education Module meets USDA Professional Standards Code 3450

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