



## The Importance of Proper Sanitization Practices during Cold & Flu Season

It is important to take protective measures against contracting and spreading illnesses, such as influenza and seasonal colds in the 2020–21 season, due to the concerns of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory illness that can cause serious consequences related to the health and wellbeing of those impacted. Flu alone affects, on average, 5–20% of the US population each year according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).<sup>1</sup> This results in 31.4 million outpatient visits and approximately 200,000 hospitalizations.<sup>2</sup> The flu can cause between 3,000 and 49,000 deaths a year, depending on the severity of the season.<sup>3</sup>

For the most effective protection against the risks of flu, the CDC recommends that all people over the age of six months old get the annual flu vaccine in the fall. Additional measures to protect against the flu and common cold include the following:

- Disinfect or sanitize high-contact surfaces and objects frequently
- Frequently and properly wash hands with warm water and soap
- Avoid close contact with individuals who are sick
- Avoid leaving home when sick; the CDC recommends staying home for 24 hours after fever is gone
- Always cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching your face including your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Practice regular good health habits including getting proper sleep, nutrients, and exercise

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup><https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17544181/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/faq.htm>



In order to take proper precautions against transmitting illnesses in the workplace, foodservice workers should be advised to stay home when sick to avoid the potential of spreading germs to other employees and/or customers. According to a 2015 study conducted by Intertek Alchemy, a company that specializes in promoting productivity and safety improvements in the food industry, 51% of workers come to work when they are sick.<sup>4</sup>

Because there are a high number of foodservice workers reporting to their jobs despite being sick, it is important to implement strictly enforced cleaning and sanitization procedures to help minimize the risk of spreading illnesses by way of high-contact surfaces. Front-of-house, back-of-house, and restroom areas should be cleaned and sanitized frequently. Additionally, other high-contact surfaces such as menus, pens, light switches, phones, etc. should be sanitized more frequently to help prevent an illness outbreak in your business.

**Did you know?** According to a study done by Technomic's Consumer Brand Metrics, 93% of individuals surveyed felt that a restaurant's cleanliness was an important or very important consideration to choosing a restaurant.<sup>5</sup>

When properly sanitizing, the presence of germs and other potentially harmful pathogens is reduced to a healthy level. In the foodservice industry, sanitization standards for both food contact and non-food contact surfaces is the reduction of contamination by 99.999% and 99.9%, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Disinfectants can also be effective in killing germs on surfaces, but are not as commonly used for food-contact applications as sanitizer. Chemicals such as quaternary ammonium (quat) and chlorine are the most frequently used sanitizers for food-contact surfaces and, when used with the proper equipment, can protect against viruses.

The active ingredients in quat and chlorine may chemically bind with certain towels, such as cotton and paper towels. As the sanitizing agents become trapped over time, the sanitizer risks depletion to an insufficient concentration. Concentration of sanitizer below 200 ppm may not adequately kill harmful microorganisms, which is why it is important to ensure towels are not trapping the sanitizer. Chicopee's sanitizer compatible towels are made of a propriety nonwoven technology, which is specifically engineered to release the sanitizer from the towel onto surfaces. Unlike cotton or paper towels, Chicopee's sanitizer compatible line will not consume the active sanitizing ingredients or trap them in the towel.

During this cold and flu season, help deliver protection and satisfaction for your customers and employees by using the right tools for the task.

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.alchemysystems.com/content/research/mind-of-the-food-worker/>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.technomic.com/data-insights/consumer/ignite-consumer>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.foodsafetymagazine.com/magazine-archive1/augustseptember-2011/sanitizers-and-disinfectants-the-chemicals-of-prevention/>