



## HOW TO CLEAN YOUR HANDS PROPERLY

Wash your hands thoroughly and often with warm running water and soap. Rub your hands together for at least 15 seconds. If using hand sanitizer, make sure to rub your hands until it dries.

## WHEN TO CLEAN YOUR HANDS

- Upon entering and leaving the facility.
- Upon entering and leaving the residents' rooms or area.
- Before and after contact with the residents and their belongings or furniture.
- After using the washroom.
- Before and after eating.

*If you have any questions or concerns about outbreaks at the home, speak to the facility's administrator or manager.*

Outbreaks can be very stressful for everyone involved as we try to prevent your loved ones from getting sick.

You play an important role in keeping residents, staff, and other visitors safe.



**For information about  
a personal health matter,  
speak to your health care provider.**



**WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY  
HEALTH UNIT**

[www.wechu.org](http://www.wechu.org)

519-258-2146 ext. 1420

**WHAT VISITORS  
NEED TO KNOW**

# Outbreaks

**in Long-Term Care and  
Retirement Homes**

*Learn how to protect yourself  
and your loved one.*



 **WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY  
HEALTH unit**  
Bureau de santé de Windsor-comté d'Essex

# What is an Outbreak?

An outbreak is when there are a group of people who become sick with similar symptoms and spread germs to one another. Outbreaks can last several days to months.

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN OUTBREAK?

Facilities work hard to prevent other people from getting sick by:

- Informing residents and visitors of the outbreak by posting signs at entrances.
- Teaching visitors how to protect themselves during their visit.
- Promoting the importance of getting vaccinated against the flu to residents, staff, family, and visitors.
- Limiting the number of residents with whom the visitor has contact.
- Using gloves, gowns, masks, and eye protection, as needed, to care for sick residents.
- Having visitors wear gowns, masks, gloves, and eye protection, as needed.
- Promoting increased hand washing.
- Increasing environmental cleaning.
- Having ill staff stay at home.
- Encouraging ill residents to stay in their room and/or unit.
- Encouraging residents to use protective equipment if needed.
- Rescheduling non-urgent appointments.
- Rescheduling group activities.

### WHY are Outbreaks declared?



Outbreaks are declared so that everyone is aware and can take the proper steps to prevent the spread of illness. Residents of long-term care and retirement homes are more likely to get sick because they have a harder time fighting germs. It is also easier to spread illness in group settings.



## WHAT CAN VISITORS DO TO HELP?

Visitors can spread germs to residents. They are also at risk of getting sick themselves or bringing germs back to their own families at home. Visit [www.wechu.org](http://www.wechu.org) to see what facilities are in outbreaks and follow these steps to protect yourself and your loved ones.

- Follow instructions from staff and observe the posted signs during your visit.
- Get your flu vaccine each year to lower your risk of getting the flu and spreading it to others.
- Do not visit if you have a fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy or runny nose, diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting. An ill visitor can put everyone in the facility at risk.
- Limit your visit to one resident and visit them in their rooms.
- Encourage ill residents to stay in their rooms and/or units.
- Clean your hands often and thoroughly.
- Ask staff for help if you are unsure of what to do.

